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ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY

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FOUR LECTURES ON
ENGLISH
NONCONFORMITY

BY

EDWARD CAREY PIKE, B.A.

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PREFACE

THESE Lectures were prepared at the request of the Exeter Evangelical Free Church Council, and were delivered to large audiences in the Barnfield Hall early in 1894. They have been delivered also in Plymouth, Devonport, Torquay, and other places. They are now published, with very slight alteration, in compliance with the expressed wish of many who heard them. The aim is to exhibit, as briefly as is compatible with clearness, Nonconformist principles in an historical setting, and in a manner to stimulate further inquiry. The ground taken being that which is common to the Free Evangelical Churches of the country, no attempt is made to indicate the distinctive tenets of any of them. For instance, the Baptists and the Friends each hold views which are not shared by other Nonconformists ; but it is good to show the importance of those principles on which all are agreed.

So many gifted writers having treated the subject, it may seem rash on the Author's part to add his contribution. He was asked to do so, however, and hopes that some need may be met by the effort. It is often lamented that many of our young people know very little of the value and the cost of the Nonconformity to which they owe far more than they imagine.

Amongst the works consulted in the preparation of the

Lectures, and also quoted, are the following : Bishop Burnet's "Reformation of the Church of England ;" J. R. Green's "Short History of the English People ;" Hallam's "Constitutional History ;" Macaulay's "England ;" Neal's "History of the Puritans ;" Skeats' "History of the Free Churches ;" "Church and State under the Tudors," by Gilbert W. Child, M.A. ; "English Nonconformity," by Dr. Robert Vaughan ; the Hanserd Knolly's Society's "Broadmead Records," "Martyrology," and "Tracts on Liberty of Conscience ;" Carlyle's "Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches ;" "John Wiclif," by Lewis Sergeant ; the Lives of "John Wesley" and "George Whitefield," by Rev. L. Tyerman ; "Catholic Belief," by the Very Rev. J. Faà di Bruno, D.D. ; "Documents relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity ;" "The English Catholic's Vade-Mecum ;" Bishop Hooper's "Early Writings ;" Milton's Prose Works ; "The Nonconformist's Memorial," originally by Dr. Calamy ; "Tracts for the Times ;" Newman's "Apologia ;" "Review of the Churches ;" Blackstone's "Commentaries."

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ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY

I

THE BIRTH OF ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY IN THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

“No” and “yes”—Where is the schism?—Principles—Holy Island and Canterbury—Rome’s victory—Darkness—“The Morning Star”—Rome’s title-deeds—Private judgment “for the last time”—Conscience—Spiritual test—Bible or Pope?—Seed-sowing—The Ploughboy’s Bible—The Bishop’s bonfire—The Martyr’s prayer—F. D.—Pope and pagan—Bewildered infallibility—The wrench—The blacksmith’s son and his master—Burning the saints—Conventicles—Divided councils—Forward a little—Thrown back—Obscure sufferers—The candle lighted—The goal afar,

THE Nonconformist, in saying “no,” says it as a natural sequel to having said “yes.” The importance of being able to say “no” when improper demands are made and dangerous courses prescribed cannot be exaggerated, but the preceding “yes” is of equal or greater importance. If Nonconformity were simply a negation it would be a poor thing, but inasmuch as Conformity to Christ is its root and reason, it may blossom into the sublime. The satisfaction that one feels in tracing the various stages of Nonconformity and in marking its growth and expansion, arises from the

conviction that the process observed is a gradual return to primitive Christianity.

At the outset I wish to say that throughout these lectures I hope to make it plain that Nonconformity is no freak, or fashion, or matter of taste, but that it rests on certain great principles—that adherence to these principles has cost a great deal, and that they are worth preserving. We are called schismatics, and so we should be if loyalty to Christ did not make us Nonconformists; but our plea is that it does. We challenge those from whom we differ to show that on the fundamental questions which divide us they are better representatives of primitive Christianity than we are. If they cannot do it, the charge of schism may be dismissed as an unfounded accusation. We have only to make sure of our loyalty to Christ to be able to look the most imposing ecclesiastical dignitaries in the face and say to them, "There may be schism, but it is not with us."

The principles of English Nonconformity which I shall endeavour to exhibit in these lectures will relate to—THE STANDARD OF AUTHORITY IN RELIGION, LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE, and THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH. As to the first, we maintain *the sufficiency of the Scriptures*. As to the second, we maintain *the right of private judgment and personal accountability to God*. Under the last, reference will be made to *Gathered Churches, the Rule of Christ by His Spirit, the Priesthood of all Believers, and Christian Willinghood*.

These principles are common to the Evangelical Free Churches of this country. It is my purpose to show how they gradually became prominent and influential in the religious life of the nation, and how the acceptance of them

has involved numerous separations from the Church, which, to use Blackstone's descriptive phrase, is "emphatically *by law* established."

The earliest "no" of which to speak was directed against Romanism as controlling the Church life of this country. The theory of certain so-called Church defenders which represents the English Church as national, and having an independent existence apart from Rome, before the time of Henry VIII., the stern facts of history compel us to reject.

They tell us that there was a Church in England before there was a nation. Certainly there were two at least; but how either of these could be the national Church before there was a nation one fails to see.

I do not forget that Christianity had a firm hold of our British ancestors when the Romans were masters of the country, and that it was not extinguished by the waves of Anglo-Saxon paganism which flowed over the land. I would not minimise the debt England subsequently owed to Iona and Scoto-Irish evangelists, by whom the northern Saxons were brought to profess the Christian faith, and whose work extended to other parts of the country also. Very likely, as one who has studied the authorities on the subject remarks, "Anglo-Saxon Britain would have become Christian through their means had the service been left in their hands." Their labours were not confined to these islands, but extended to the Continent of Europe.

The coming of Augustine, however, had somewhat preceded this outburst of Irish zeal, and his successful mission was sealed by the Pope appointing him Archbishop of Canterbury, the first of the long succession of primates of the Church in England.

It may be difficult to estimate the relative importance of the work of Augustine and the native evangelists, but there is no difficulty in showing that the Romish Church, which presumptuously calls itself Catholic, was the recognised Church in England a hundred and fifty years before the rudimentary nationality under King Egbert came to be.

I have said that there were at least two Churches in England in those early days. The supremacy of Rome was not won without a long and desperate struggle, but it *was* won. There was the Irish Church to be reckoned with. It was at Lindisfarne, afterwards called Holy Island, on the wild Northumbrian coast, that a see was founded by Aidan, the missionary sent from Iona at King Oswald's request, which was the formidable rival of Canterbury. Mr. J. R. Green says: "The labours of Aidan, the victories of Oswald and Oswi, seemed to have annexed England to the Irish Church. The monks of Lindisfarne looked for their ecclesiastical tradition, not to Rome, but to Ireland; and quoted for their guidance the instructions, not of Gregory, but of Columba. Whatever claims of supremacy over the whole English Church might be pressed by the see of Canterbury, the real metropolitan of the Church as it existed in the north of England was the Abbot of Iona." Rome fought hard, and though often defeated, returned to the attack. "The strife between the two parties rose so high at last that Oswi was prevailed upon to summon, in 664, a general council at Whitby, where the future ecclesiastical allegiance of England should be decided." In the contest before King Oswi, Colman, the successor of Aidan, represented Lindisfarne, and Wilfrith of York appeared for Rome. When the former was observed to appeal to the

authority of Columba, and the latter to that of St. Peter, the perplexed King said, "You own that Christ gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven—has He given such power to Columba?" The answer being a negative, the King rejoined, "Then will I rather obey the porter of heaven, lest when I reach its gates he who has the keys in his keeping turn his back upon me, and there be none to open." Thus the question of Rome's supremacy was settled. Colman and the bulk of the Lindisfarne monks retired from the scene, retreating to Iona. A remnant remained for a few years. "The victory of Rome in the synod of Whitby" was undoubted; and she was not slow to follow it up. Theodore of Tarsus, a Greek monk, was sent, in 668, to be Archbishop of Canterbury, and a reorganiser of the see.

The English Church as completely submitted to the Pope as any Church did. Indeed Neander describes "the English Church" as holding a "position specially dependent on Rome." No doubt there was usurpation on Rome's part in England. So there was in France, and Spain, and Germany. The whole history of Rome is one of usurpation; but it was acquiesced in, or submitted to, all round. Dean Milman says: "With all the Teutonic part of Latin Christendom the belief in the supremacy of the Pope was coeval with their Christianity. It was an article of their original creed as much as the Redemption; their apostles were commissioned by the Pope. To him they humbly looked for instruction and encouragement, even almost for permission to advance upon their sacred adventure." After quoting Dean Milman thus, Mr. Gilbert W. Child, in his work on "Church and State under

the Tudors," adds, "Thus the Church in England was in every sense a daughter of the Church of Rome, or rather was an extension into England of the one great Catholic Church of the West, whose metropolitan seat was Rome. And the papal power remained in England, in varying degrees, no doubt, but continuously, until it was abruptly ended by the anti-papal legislation of Henry VIII."

There is a strong temptation to quote more largely from Mr. Child's luminous pages, which for want of time must be resisted. He shows that not only during the century before Henry VIII. was the English Church "a branch of the Church of Rome," as admitted even by Dean Hook, the "champion of Anglican independence," but that in fact there was no Church *of* England, but only a Church *in* England, before Henry VIII. broke with Rome. The anti-papal legislation in the time of the Plantagenets and their successors, which is advanced to support the theory of independence, is taken account of; but it is shown to have been directed against encroachments on the temporal government—not always successful—and, moreover, mostly at a time when the papal power was depressed by disreputable schism. Independence forsooth! Why, the highest dignitaries in the Church were often appointed by the Pope; his court was the final court of appeal; the clergy were taxed by him; and the payment of Peter's pence was kept up by the people of England from the very early days of the Church's history till Henry VIII. stopped it. Object-lessons in dependence on Rome have not been lacking, the most humiliating of them being the spectacle of King John at the feet of the papal legate.

It is not my business now to trace the growth of papal

assumptions and the advance of papal power through the dark ages, nor to describe the superstitions and corruptions prevalent throughout Western Christendom under the dominance of the Roman Church. Grievous and gross were those superstitions and corruptions. No doubt there were even in the darkest times true and faithful souls who held fast by a simpler gospel than was taught by the so-called Catholic Church, but they dwelt in obscure places, and were of little account amongst men. How often they must have sighed for the long night to pass, wondering whether it would ever end. It was to end. The dawn would come. The sleep of the ages would be broken.

A hundred and fifty years before the days of Luther and the German Reformers there shone in our English sky "the morning star of the Reformation"—for so has our John Wycliffe been aptly described. Studious and devout men had begun to ponder and discuss. The human intellect was awakening and bursting the fetters which confined it, sometimes engaging itself on questions which appear trivial enough, but dealing also with much that was profound. Wycliffe was one of these—the foremost man of an Oxford revival with which not every Oxford revival of more recent date will compare favourably. He was a man of fine intellect and great learning, and with a tender conscience. His body was so spare and frail that one wonders it should hold together long enough for his life-work to be done. He was at home with nobles and rulers of the land, and he had deep sympathy with the poor and the oppressed. He could worthily represent his country in great controversies, and he could stand bravely alone with truth when powerful men forsook him. Two or three glimpses of the scenes

through which the man in his maturity passed may occupy our attention for a few minutes.

In February 1377 Courtenay, Bishop of London, summons Wycliffe to St. Paul's, and thither, gladly enough, he goes, to answer for himself and his doctrine. He goes not alone. John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, goes too. Also Lord Percy of Alnwick, Marshal of England, with armed men. Instead of making his defence, Wycliffe is the quiet centre of a great tumult. First a dispute between the Marshal of England and the Bishop as to whether Wycliffe shall take a seat. Next a fierce wordy war, which might easily have developed into something else, between the Bishop and John of Gaunt. The end is confusion inside the Cathedral, and outside also. "Doctor Wicked-believe," as they call him, escapes.

The same year Pope Gregory XI. sends five bulls to England concerning Wycliffe—one to the King, one to Oxford University, and three to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London conjointly. From his university Wycliffe wins acquittal. His conclusions are not heretical, they are true, though the expression of them may be open to misconception. Before the prelates at Lambeth the Reformer presently appears. It should have been at St. Paul's, but "the prelates lost their nerve, and they were compelled to change the venue." "The indomitable man," says a recent biographer, "set himself to expound and expand his conclusions, and stated them all over again with increased clearness and pungency, neither shirking nor fining down, but treating every charge as a text for new exposition." The gentle hand of the Princess Joan is laid upon these zealous ecclesiastics to restrain them. For that

and perhaps other reasons they do no more than prescribe silence, a prescription not worth much in such a case. The papal bulls are a failure, and just then their author dies.

Early in 1379 Wycliffe lies very ill at Oxford. It is supposed he will die, and the friars are not sorry. They send a deputation of four, a Dominican, a Franciscan, a Carmelite, and an Augustinian, and with them to the chamber of the sick man go four aldermen of the city. Of course they express good wishes for his recovery, but their main object is to obtain from their old reprovcr a retraction of the things he has said against them. They have him at a disadvantage, as he lies on that bed weak and well nigh worn out. But their onslaught acts like a strong tonic. Asking his servants to prop him up with the pillows, he fixes his keen eyes upon his visitors, and exclaims, "I will not die but live; and I will show up the evil deeds of the friars."

In 1381 Wycliffe lectures at Oxford against transubstantiation, and, after inquiry before the Chancellor, his teaching is condemned. If the Reformer was "disconcerted" he was calm. "He sat in his chair and listened to the decision, and, after it had been read out, he contended that neither the Chancellor nor any of his colleagues had been able to break down his argument." Wycliffe appealed from the Chancellor of the University to the King's Council. It is said John of Gaunt himself took the answer down to Oxford. Whether that were so or not, the Duke's advice to the Reformer was to be silent concerning the errors of Rome. Conscience forbade him to yield, and he spoke the more plainly.

Courtenay, now Archbishop of Canterbury, summons a synod in the Dominican Priory in Holborn. Wycliffe is

too ill to attend. An earthquake shakes the wall where the Council meets—a startling event—which, as a portent, is capable of very opposite interpretations, and the Archbishop very promptly gives his. At an adjourned meeting Wycliffe is condemned. His opponents triumph, but he works on in quiet Lutterworth for his few remaining days. One Sunday in 1384 he is stricken down by paralysis in his church, and in a few days expires.

Thirty-one years after Wycliffe's death the Council of Constance, which, with shameless perfidy, doomed John Huss to the flames, decreed that Wycliffe's bones should be dug out of the grave, if they could be distinguished from those of the faithful. Twelve years later the order had not been obeyed, so the Pope reminded the Bishop of Lincoln of his duty. 'To his lordship's disgrace he did the papal bidding, and Wycliffe's bones were burnt. Could this have happened if the Anglican Church had not been a veritable limb of Rome?

Plainly, then, John Wycliffe was, in the judgment of the Romish Church, so detestable a heretic that his very bones must not lie in a Christian graveyard. Now, if we are to justify his revolt and ourselves in sharing his offence, we should make sure of our ground.

According to the teaching of the Romish Church the Word of God is divided into two portions, namely, Holy Scripture and Divine Tradition, and the latter is deemed the more important. This is what we are told authoritatively—"TRADITION, without Holy Scripture, Old or New, sufficed for many years, and could still suffice. But HOLY SCRIPTURE has never sufficed by itself; it always stood in need of Divine TRADITION: for it is only by this Divine

Tradition that we learn that *Holy Scripture* is an inspired book. It is only *Tradition* that can give with authority and certainty the right meaning of *Holy Scripture*. Without *Tradition* the *Holy Scripture* may be made to speak in many discordant ways, thus destroying its authority altogether."

Now this claim for *Tradition* has an imposing appearance, but when the matter is looked into it is instructive to observe how, after all, the battle with Rome has to be fought out by reference to the Bible. If we ask what right Rome has to claim for *Tradition* an equal (not to say superior) authority with the Bible, we are referred to texts of Scripture to sustain the claim. On the meaning of those passages of course we join issue. It is not my business now to enter upon the discussion of them. I simply need to point out that it is from the pages of the Bible that the question has to be settled, one way or the other, even according to Rome's own showing.

Then Rome insists that if God has given a Revelation in a book, He must have given on earth an Infallible Interpreter of it. First of all we may well protest against the assumption as to what God must have done, and adhere to the humbler task of ascertaining what He has done—a consideration, by the way, which many Protestants also would do well to ponder. And then again we note that if the claim of the Church to be the Infallible Interpreter of the Scriptures be questioned, Rome has to fall back as before on texts of Scripture, on the meaning of which we take leave to differ from her. I do not discuss these texts, I simply again point out that, according to Rome's own showing, the battle has to be fought out by reference to the Bible.

When we are reminded that the Church, or, as we prefer to say, the Churches, have recognised the authority of the Scriptures, we emphasise the fact that the recognition of an authority does not give to those who recognise it authority also. Our recognition of Her Majesty the Queen does not confer on us any sovereign rights.

Romanists describe their so-called "Divine Tradition" as "the unwritten Word of God." Leaving the question of its being the word of God, what a farce it is to call it unwritten. It is contained in a mass of writings which ordinary people can know little or nothing about. They tell us that "without Tradition the Holy Scripture may be made to speak in many discordant ways." Are we then to expect sweet harmony to be discoursed to us by the accumulated traditions of the ages? Practically it means that the Romanist has to receive what his priest tells him. It is not the first time the Word of God has been made of none effect by the traditions of men.

The authority of the Church is set up by Rome against the right of private judgment, which she derides. But here let it be observed that it is only by an act of private judgment that the authority can be accepted. Mr. Orby Shipley, in a letter to the *Times* respecting his entrance into the Romish communion, which Romish authority reprints with satisfaction and circulates widely, says—"For the last time I exercised my private judgment, as every person must exercise that gift of God in some way and to some extent, and I humbly sought admission into the communion of the Catholic Church." Yes, "every person must exercise that gift of God in some way, and to some extent." And we add that the surrender of "that gift of God" into the keep-

ing of any mere man, or any Church on earth, is an act of intellectual suicide, for the consequences of which the doer will be held responsible. No one can alter the fact that "each one of us shall give account of himself to God." The temptation to cast off responsibility may assail very strongly wearied and perplexed thinkers, as it does pleasure-loving worldlings, but the thing cannot be done.

There is in each of us a conscience which can only be silenced under protest and at grievous peril. Obedience to conscience is obligatory on every man, for it is his interpretation of the voice of God. If the interpretation be poor and unworthy, the only remedy is such enlightenment as may be obtained from the Bible. And it should be added that the Spirit, whose guidance is needed for the understanding of the book, is not the monopoly of a coterie or a caste, but is promised to "as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him." With Luther, on the most memorable occasion of his great career, we recognise that the only power to bind conscience is the Word of God; and we add, with him, "for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience."

Since the controversy with Rome must ultimately be decided by an appeal to Scripture, as she practically admits, if the Romish system in its amazing developments is found to be inconsistent with Scripture, we are forced to ask—How comes the want of agreement? Is this vast and imposing ecclesiastical system the work of the Holy Ghost? or is it a gigantic imposture? When we see the frightful corruptions of primitive Christianity which, through the ages, have accumulated under Rome's sway, we must indeed surrender our intellectual freedom

altogether before we can recognise in so sad a spectacle the fruit of the Spirit of God. "The Holy Ghost," said Peter and the Apostles, "God hath given to them that obey Him." If obedience is found amongst poor and despised and excommunicated people, it is not from them that the Holy Ghost departs. It may go hard, however, with their powerful and pretentious persecutors.

Consider for a moment the state of things in the Middle Ages, before the art of printing was discovered, or the Scriptures translated into the languages of the peoples. Rome had matters in these western lands almost entirely her own way. Her "Divine Traditions," as she called them, were the laws by which she governed. Picture a man brought up under these influences suddenly having access to a copy of the Bible, and finding how different the practices and teachings of the Church were from what he read there. Such an one was Luther, when, at the University of Erfurt, he lighted upon a copy of the Scriptures. That discovery issued in the great awakening of his soul. A hundred and fifty years before that, our Wycliffe had to face the hard fact that the teaching of the Bible which he studied, and the system of the Church in which he had been brought up, were woefully discordant. If he adhered to the former, he must denounce the latter. He was not minded to break with the Church, but he could not let go the Bible. He did not wish to revolt against the Pope's authority, but he could not surrender the right of private judgment and be unfaithful to conscience. In the Bible nothing was more plainly revealed than that Christ was the Head of the Church, and the pattern for all believers. Wycliffe had been taught to regard the Pope as the chief representative

of Christ in the world, and he expected to see in him the greatest likeness to Christ. What did he see? In early manhood he saw in the Church's chief one whom the late Lord Lytton has described as "the most accomplished gentleman, and the most graceful voluptuary of his time"—a pope who, amidst the horrible ravages of the plague known as "the Black Death," insisted on the jubilee pilgrimage to Rome (A.D. 1350). Clement VI. would have his "sacks of gold, though" (remarks Mr. Sergeant, in his "Life of Wycliffe") "at the cost of something like a million lives." "The Franciscans alone reckoned as many as thirty thousand deaths in consequence of this enforced pilgrimage." In Wycliffe's later years the papal schism shattered the idol of papal infallibility, for at Avignon and Rome were rival pontiffs tossing curses at one another. If then the Pope's spirit was the reverse of Christ's, surely he must be Antichrist.

It may be well to look a little more carefully at Wycliffe's position. In 1366, when arguing the case of the Parliament against paying tribute to the Pope, Wycliffe describes himself as "a humble and obedient son of the Roman Church," but that does not prevent him from saying some very plain things, which no man could venture to say who did not regard Scripture and conscience as of higher authority than ecclesiastical position. "Tribute only should be paid to those who are fit to receive it. The Pope ought to be poor, like Christ, and to leave tribute to Cæsars." Similarly, one of his Conclusions, as stated in the papal bulls, runs thus: "We ought to believe that then only does the Pope bind and loose when he conforms himself to the law of Christ." In his defence before the prelates at Lambeth, he said, "I

make my public profession, as I have often done elsewhere, professing and claiming with my whole heart to be, by the grace of God, a sound Christian, and that so far as I am able, whilst there is breath in my body, I speak forth and defend the law of Christ." In the petition to Parliament on May 6, 1382, "The first point . . . is that the rule of Christ is perfect and sufficient, without any other : that the clean religion of Christ was followed by the Apostles, but it has been overlaid by monks and friars." When the crippled old man was summoned to Rome by Pope Urban, he sent his written excuse for non-compliance with the mandate. In it there are many things you or I would not say about the Pope, but there are these remarkable words—"I accept it as a matter of belief that no man should follow the Pope, or any saint now in heaven, except in so far as he follows Christ. For John and James erred when they coveted worldly greatness ; . . . but men should not follow them in this, for at that time they were parting from Jesus Christ. From this I take it as a sound counsel that the Pope should abandon his worldly lordship to worldly lords, as Christ has given them, and at once persuade all his clerks to do the same. For thus did Christ, and thus He taught His disciples, until the fiend had blinded this world. And it seems to some men that clerks who continue to abide in error against the law of God, and cease to follow Christ in this, are open heretics, and such as support them are partners in their sin."

It is thus abundantly plain that with all desire to speak and act in harmony with the Church in which he had been brought up, Wycliffe grasped those great principles which we regard as the fundamental principles of Protestantism,

namely, the authority of the Bible and the personal responsibility of every one to his conscience and to Christ. These principles, not to mention others relating to the constitution of the Church, carried the Reformer further than at first he could have supposed they would. They might have carried him further still had he lived longer. His steps forward out of Romish darkness were so many steps back to primitive Christianity. They were a few only of those necessary to be taken before the Reformation could be accomplished.

The practical application of Wycliffe's principles was of far-reaching influence and inestimable value. Believing in the sufficiency of the Bible, Wycliffe set himself the task of giving it to his countrymen in their own tongue. It was indeed a noble work, which I can only mention in passing. The publication was probably some time from 1378 to 1382. Desiring to be loyal above all things to Christ, the Reformer sent messengers throughout the country to preach Him. They were called the Poor Priests. In their number were "university men" and "unlettered men," alike "touched by the fire of their master's zeal in his rural home at Lutterworth." Mr. Sergeant says: "They went forth to speak and associate with their kind, clad in a distinctive robe of undressed wool, brown and rough as the russet apples in their homely garden plots, relying for food and shelter on the goodwill of their hearers, forbidden to thrive by their calling like the mendicants of an Order that was no longer poor, and rich only in their knowledge of the Word of God, or haply in the possession of a roll of Scripture in their mother-tongue, and a few of their master's sermons." Thus the

treasures which Rome had carefully kept locked up from the people were made available to them, and the result was an incalculable blessing.

Wycliffe's missionaries sowed good seed throughout the land, which bore fruit in many quiet places during the century and a half which followed their master's death. The record of their work, though not conspicuous in the chronicles of England, is safely kept, we may be sure, in the archives of that "better country" to which they showed the way. Mr. Froude has represented Lollardism as an extinct force at the time the great Reformation of the sixteenth century began. Mr. Sergeant has gone to the opposite extreme in describing "all England saturated with Biblical knowledge" as a consequence of Wycliffe's home missionary enterprise. I shall content myself with quoting Mr. Hallam's sober estimate. Wycliffe's "disciples, usually called Lollards, lasted as a numerous, though obscure and proscribed sect, till, aided by the confluence of foreign streams, they swelled into the Protestant Church of England. We hear indeed little of them during some part of the fifteenth century, for they generally shunned persecution; and it is chiefly through records of persecution that we learn the existence of heretics. But immediately before the name of Luther was known, they seem to have become more numerous, or to have attracted more attention."

It was a noble thing to translate the Bible into the English tongue as Wycliffe did; but in his day there was no printing-press to multiply copies of the priceless treasure. The Poor Priests could not have had more than a few scraps of the Word of God to carry about with them. Ninety years after Wycliffe's death William Caxton, "the Father of

the English Press," had his types at work in Westminster. Ten years later William Tyndale was born—a man whose name is second to none in the story of the Protestant Reformation in England. Erasmus published his Greek Testament in 1516, a greater service to the cause of the Reformation than the timid man was aware of; but Tyndale was to render a greater service to it still. It was good to have the New Testament in Greek made accessible to scholars, it was better to have it in the language of the common people. The story of Tyndale's career may not detain us more than a moment or two. He left Cambridge University in 1519, and we see him in the Manor House of Little Sodbury, tutor and chaplain in the family of Sir John Walsh. At Sir John's hospitable board dignitaries of the Church used to meet, and many were the discussions that took place, not always conducive to peace and quietness, since the chaplain was wont to make his appeal to Scripture as against ecclesiastical traditions. One memorable dispute with a great doctor of the Church was the means of revealing the secret purpose of Tyndale's soul. Said the doctor in the hot controversy, "We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's." Thereupon his indignant opponent blazed forth, "I defy the Pope and all his laws; and if God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than you do." In 1526 Tyndale's New Testament was published. "The only perfect copy known to exist at the present time is preserved at the Baptist College, Bristol." Of course the bishops said it was full of errors. Tyndale knew it was not perfect, and wished to improve it. His wish was gratified in a singular way. This is how

Bishop Burnet tells the story : "Tonstal, then Bishop of London, . . . being at Antwerp in the year 1529, . . . sent for one Packington, an English merchant there, and desired him to see how many New Testaments of Tindal's translation he might have for money. Packington, who was a secret favourer of Tindal, told him what the bishop proposed. Tindal was very glad of it, for, being convinced of some faults in his work, he was designing a new and more correct edition ; but he was poor, and the former impression not being sold off, he could not go about it, so he gave Packington all the copies that lay in his hands, for which the bishop paid the price, and brought them over, and burnt them publicly in Cheapside. This had such an hateful appearance in it, being generally called a burning of the Word of God, that people from thence concluded there must be a visible contrariety between that book and the doctrines of those who so handled it ; by which both their prejudices against the clergy, and their desire of the New Testament was increased." In fact, all turned out as Tyndale shrewdly guessed it would when Packington whispered to him who the customer for the stock of New Testaments was. When the second edition came over to England there was a good laugh at the expense of the Bishop of London. In 1534 Tyndale was betrayed at Antwerp into the hands of his enemies and thrown into the Castle of Vilvode, eighteen miles from the city. In 1536 he was tried for heresy, and doomed to be strangled and burnt. His last words were, " Lord, open the king of England's eyes." Those eyes were opened, at least to this extent, that the king deemed it expedient to let his people have the Bible in English. Thus far the prayer was being

answered whilst the martyr prayed. Miles Coverdale's Bible, dedicated to the king, was already printed. Very soon what has been called Cranmer's Bible was to appear. When the clergy denounced Tyndale's New Testament, and the Bishop of London burnt it, the people were promised a better translation. This was subsequently declared unnecessary and inexpedient. The Protestant party in the Royal Council Chamber, however, ultimately prevailed, and England got her Bible, never to let it go again !

In my treatment of this subject of the Protestant Reformation, I desire to exhibit it as a great intellectual and spiritual awakening, and consequently pay less regard to the doings of courts and parliaments than to the influence of truth upon the minds and hearts of men. Monarchs and statesmen and high ecclesiastics, with varying motives and very different degrees of enlightenment, play their parts in the stirring drama ; but the controlling force of the movement is not with them. The Book of God is open. The blasphemous claim of the papacy to set aside Divine law is repudiated. The Scriptures are coming to be regarded as "the standard of the Catholic faith." The conscience of the people is being quickened and governed by an unseen power. It is necessary to observe somewhat particularly the actions of illustrious personages, for the outward frame of things is moulded largely by them. Yet we shall not forget that they are instruments in a hand they see not, which times "their exits and their entrances" to the requirements of a plan beyond their meaning.

When young Henry VIII. ascended the throne, it would have required a bold man to predict that his would be the hand to snap the link which bound the Church in England

to the see of Rome. Amongst the crowned heads of Europe there was no more devoted son of the Church than he. Bishop Burnet ventures to say "that had he died any time before the nineteenth year of his reign, he could scarce have escaped canonisation, notwithstanding all his faults; for he abounded in those virtues which had given saintship to kings for a thousand years together, and had done more than they all did, by writing a book for the Roman faith." Henry's faults were undoubtedly grave, nevertheless there were high dignitaries in the Church whose morals were worse than the king's. The book against Luther, moreover, would cover a multitude of sins.

By a papal bull Henry received the title of Defender of the Faith, whereof, as every one knows, the court fool made merry at the time, and the F.D. on our coins is a reminiscence to-day. The bestowment of the title by Pope Leo X. on King Henry VIII. is a thing to move one to laughter or to tears. The Pope belonged to the proud Medici house of high renown. An accomplished man of the world, like his father before him, he was simply an elegant pagan, who is said to have regarded the story of Christ as a profitable fable. King Henry was probably sincere in accepting the doctrines of Rome, and, to do him justice, he never renounced them. When he consented to the circulation of the Scriptures, he had no thought of putting the familiar teachings of the Church in jeopardy. He never forsook the Catholic faith, but he did cast off the papal yoke. It is well known how that came about. Concerning the divorce of Catherine of Aragon, a few words will suffice. Another Medici was in St. Peter's chair, namely, Clement VII., an illegitimate son of that illustrious

house, and cousin of Leo X. He was a mean and selfish and unfortunate man. It was certainly hard on the Pope to be asked to set aside a marriage for which one of his infallible predecessors had granted a dispensation, and take care to be himself infallibly right in doing so. Yet a feat of that kind was not beyond the ingenuity of the papal court, at least as practised to its own satisfaction. There were, however, serious mundane difficulties of another kind. On the one hand, the Pope had a not unreasonable dread of Queen Catherine's nephew, the Emperor Charles, who had sacked Rome, and made his Holiness a prisoner. On the other hand, he feared to alienate so stout a champion of the Church as King Henry, "Defender of the Faith." Poor Clement stood to lose, however he might decide, and so he thought it the better part to exhaust every possible means of delay. Henry's patience held out a remarkably long time, but it gave way at last. And then there came not only the King's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, but also the divorce of the English Church from Rome; neither event unmarked by tragic incident. The haughty and ambitious Cardinal Wolsey, "the last high priest of Rome in England," had to rue the day that he became one of the Pope's dilatory legates. He had "touch'd the highest point of all (his) greatness," and from that proud eminence in Church and State he fell crashing down. On the way to London, in charge of the Lieutenant of the Tower, he died, a broken-hearted man, in Leicester Abbey. "And, Master Knygton," moaned the prisoner, as he was slipping away from all earthly custody, "had I but served God as diligently as I have served the king, He would not have given me over in my grey hairs." Another victim of those

sharp times of severance was the upright and accomplished Sir Thomas More, once Henry's bosom friend as well as trusted counsellor. But neither gifts nor friendship could save him from the headsman's axe, when he persistently refused to acknowledge the new ecclesiastical supremacy of the king.

Other men became King Henry's powerful instruments in Church and State. None more notable than Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell. Of the latter I will speak presently, the introduction of the former on the stage of political life may be related now. At a critical moment, when the king was wearied out by the delays interposed by the Pope, it happened that two courtiers met Dr. Cranmer at a supper table. They tried to elicit his opinion on the great topic of the day, the royal divorce. He endeavoured to avoid giving any, but at length suggested that the question should be decided by Scripture, and the universities might be conferred with as to the Scriptural solution of the difficulty. When this was told to the king he was delighted, wished it had been thought of sooner, and so trouble and expense have been saved. He would have Cranmer sent for to court, saying in his coarse way "that he had the sow by the right ear."

The parliament during which the great separation of the English Church from Rome was effected sat from 1529 to 1536. It is not needful to enumerate the various Acts which limited clerical privileges and power at home, and dealt in detail and effectively with the encroachments of the Papacy. It is enough to cite that great measure which dwarfs all the others, namely, "The Supremacy Act," of 1534. "Albeit the King's Majesty justly and rightly is,

and ought to be, the supreme head of the Church of England, and so is recognised by the clergy of this realm in their convocations, yet nevertheless, for corroboration and confirmation thereof, and for increase of virtue in Christ's religion within this realm of England, and to repress and extirp all errors, heresies, and other enormities and abuses heretofore used in the same ; be it enacted by authority of this present Parliament—that the King our Sovereign Lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted, and reputed the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England called *Anglicana Ecclesia*, and shall have and enjoy annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm, as well the title and stile thereof as all honours, dignities, pre-eminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits, and commodities, to the said dignity of supreme head of the same Church belonging and appertaining ; and that our said Sovereign Lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall have full power and authority from time to time to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts, and enormities, whatsoever they be, which by any manner, spiritual authority, or jurisdiction, ought or may lawfully be reformed, repressed, ordered, redressed, corrected, restrained, or amended, most to the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue in Christ's religion, and for the conservation of the peace, unity, and tranquillity of this realm, any usage, custom, foreign laws, foreign authority, prescription or any other thing or things to the contrary hereof notwithstanding." Three years before, when the clergy had been compelled to make their submission to the king as "supreme

head of the English Church," they had contrived to get added the qualification, "As much as is allowed by the law of Christ." But no such qualification was permitted to appear in "The Supremacy Act." The separation from Rome was complete, and the submission of the clergy to the king was absolute.

Rome could do nothing with her wayward son. Pope Paul III. excommunicated him one year, and the next said he did not mean it seriously, and two years later published his bull in grim earnest, being furious at the desecration and destruction of Thomas Becket's shrine at Canterbury, where Romish tricks had through the generations been gathering a great hoard of gold. It was all too late. Papal threats and blandishments were lost on the "Defender of the Faith."

The new head of the Church had an iron will, and did not allow his supremacy to be a merely nominal affair. He had the instrument he wanted in his prime minister, Thomas Cromwell, who was, says Burnet, "a man of mean birth, but noble qualities." He had been Wolsey's servant, and he bravely stood by his fallen master in the last dark days of ruined fortune. The son of a Putney blacksmith, Cromwell's swinging blows on the monasteries, worthy of the blacksmith's arm, earned for him the title of *Malleus Monachorum*. He "was made the king's vicegerent in ecclesiastical matters," and Convocation became the creature of the king. The system of Cromwell, which lasted after he himself had fallen, has been "shortly described as an absolutism in Church and State, established and maintained by the connivance of Parliament."

The question now naturally arises as to the gain to

Protestant Nonconformity by the substitution of the supremacy of Henry VIII. for the supremacy of the Pope. The outward and visible separation from Rome was a gain in itself. The suppression of the monasteries removed an enormous hindrance to the Gospel out of the way. The fiat that went forth against idolatrous images and ridiculous relics was a blow struck at degrading superstitions. The printing and publishing of the Scriptures in the English tongue was an unspeakable boon. Thus the ground was being cleared for the conflicts which had yet to be fought for human freedom and the truth of God.

Certainly there was an advance. Here is a striking illustration. In 1536 the people were by royal order exhorted "to teach their children the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments in English." For doing that very thing seventeen years before, that same King Henry having been ten years upon the throne (1519), six men and a woman were burned at Coventry. It was a remarkable change, yet the fires of persecution were not extinguished. For instance, in 1533 the scholarly John Frith, the friend of Tyndale, was burnt at Smithfield. In a transport of joy he "hugged the faggots in his arms, as the instruments that were to send him to his eternal rest." In 1538 John Lambert, formerly minister of the little English company at Antwerp, to which Tyndale and Frith belonged, was burnt at Smithfield also. The execution was managed in "a barbarous manner," too sickening for description; but the martyr's confession was heard to the last, "None but Christ, none but Christ."

Protestants were not the only sufferers in King Henry's reign, as witness the case of Sir Thomas More, already

alluded to. In fact, Protestant and Papist might go to the stake together, the former for denying the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament, and the latter for refusing to acknowledge the ecclesiastical supremacy of the king. His Majesty was no Protestant, and in his court there were Protestant and anti-Protestant forces in dangerous proximity. The Duke of Norfolk, and Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, were ready to do all in their power for the preservation of the Romish doctrine. Cranmer and Cromwell, with whom were the sympathies of Queen Anne, were equally wishful to further the Reformation.

Perhaps as striking an illustration as one can give of the opposing influences operating in the councils of the king is seen in the action taken in respect to the circulation of the Scriptures and the passing of the Statute of the Six Articles, which the Protestants called "The Bloody Bill," at the same time. When the Bible was printed according to royal order, incumbents were directed by Cromwell, in the king's name, "to provide one of these Bibles, and set it up publicly in the church, and not to hinder or to discourage the reading of it, but to encourage all persons to peruse it, as being the true lively word of God, which every Christian ought to believe, embrace, and follow, if he expected to be saved." Subsequently leave was given "for private persons to buy Bibles, and keep them in their houses." The letters-patent for this stated "that the king was desirous to have his subjects attain the knowledge of God's Word." Yet this king, wishful that his subjects should have "knowledge of God's Word," was determined to make them accept Romish doctrines, so blind was he to the incompatibility of the two things. The Statute of Six

Articles was passed after manly and brave resistance on the part of Archbishop Cranmer. By it, under penalty of death, the people were to accept the doctrines set forth. The first article affirmed the real presence in the Sacrament; the second, the sufficiency of communion in one kind; the third insisted on clerical celibacy; the others related to the obligation of vows of chastity, the benefit of masses, and auricular confession.

The Statute of the Six Articles was not intended by the Romish party to be a dead letter, and very soon, through their too eager zeal, five hundred persons were in London prisons under the Act. This caused uneasiness in the court, and the king was pretty well compelled to pardon them all.

Of the fluctuating fortunes of the Reformation during the closing years of King Henry's reign it is not necessary to speak. Cromwell fell a victim to the intrigues of his enemies. It seems almost miraculous that Cranmer should have escaped. He was spared, however, to render Protestantism most important services in the reign of the youthful Edward VI., and to crown these services by a triumphant martyr death in Queen Mary's reign.

When Edward VI. became king, his government lost no time in letting men feel that they could breathe a freer air. The Statute of Six Articles was promptly set aside. Persecution ceased. In 1549 the first Book of Common Prayer was sanctioned and published, a very distinct advance on Reformation lines. In 1552 a revised Book was issued, in which the advance was more marked still.

The short reign of Edward was followed by the even shorter reign of Mary, black and hideous with deeds of

torture and of blood, which may make men shudder as they read of them to the end of time. Then Elizabeth ascended the throne, and Protestantism was re-established.

Each of these monarchs was supreme head of the Anglican Church. The royal authority was used to the full in King Edward's name. Mary used it to throw England back into the arms of the Pope. Elizabeth had a scruple about the phrase "head of the Church," and adopted that of "supreme governor" instead. It was only the alteration of a phrase, for her supremacy was as real and palpable as ever her father's had been.

In the first year of Elizabeth's reign "the new Anglican Church" (Mr. Hallam's phrase) was made fast to the State in a condition of "subordination and dependency" by "the Acts of supremacy and uniformity." These statutes were quickly supplemented by the establishment of the High Commission Court, with large and dangerous powers of administration in ecclesiastical matters. For a while the more advanced Reformers, some of whom had breathed a freer air at Zurich and Geneva, disregarded the ceremonies and discarded the vestments, of which they disapproved. "Some continued to wear the habits, others laid them aside; the communicants received the Sacrament, sitting, or standing, or kneeling, according to the minister's taste; some baptized in the font, others in a basin; some with the sign of the cross, others without it." In 1565 steps were taken to put an end to this irregular variety. Archbishop Parker "obtained from the Queen a proclamation peremptorily requiring a conformity in the use of the clerical vestments and other matters of discipline." Thirty-seven out of ninety-eight London ministers summoned before

Parker and their bishop refused, Mr. Hallam tells us, to promise compliance with the order. "They were in consequence suspended from their ministry, and their livings put in sequestration. But these, unfortunately, as was the case in all this reign, were the most conspicuous, both for their general character, and for their talent in preaching." The question then had to be faced whether inability to conform to the Established Church was to necessitate the abandonment of the ministry of the Gospel. There was only one worthy answer possible to spiritually minded men, and it was given in the formation of unostentatious conventicles, to which, as might be expected, no toleration was shown.

Besides these Puritan gatherings there sprang up little churches of the Independent and Baptist order—Brownists and Anabaptists they were scornfully called. The separated life of English Nonconformity had begun.

I have endeavoured throughout this lecture to make prominent two points, namely, Holy Scripture, the standard of authority in religion, and the Divine right of liberty of conscience. On these principles the Reformation, so far as it was a spiritual movement, was based. The consequent nonconformity to the Church of Rome involved more radical changes than men generally perceived or were willing to admit. It involves more to-day. The Roman Church, with her great and marvellous organisation, still claims to be the Holy Catholic Church, and to rule the conscience and the life of every Christian man. Before we yield to this stupendous demand, we have a right to know by what authority it is made. The documents in which alone the title-deeds could be found were, previous to the times of Reformation, locked up in languages which few understood,

and hidden away from the eyes of men. They have now for centuries been open to inspection, and are regarded by us, as by the Reformers, to be fatal to Rome's assumption. But our Nonconformity, to be consistent, cannot be confined to the narrow limits possible to the men of the earlier times. On them the light of morning was gradually stealing, ours is a noonday brightness. We see corruptions that were unperceived by them, and detect perils in things they thought harmless. Our defiance of the giant of the city of the seven hills commits us to making a clearance also of all the pigmy imitation popedom with which Christendom is now and again infested.

Let us for a minute or so observe precisely the position of the two vital principles of Protestantism at the time of the Reformation.

Before the time of the Statute of the Six Articles Cromwell had been ordered to declare to Convocation "that it was the king's pleasure that the rites and ceremonies of the Church should be reformed by the rules of Scripture, and that nothing was to be maintained which did not rest on that authority ; for it was absurd, since that was acknowledged to contain the laws of religion, that recourse should rather be had to glosses, or the decrees of popes, than to these." That seems to be explicit, and yet the issue was this, that along with the Bible there was prescribed for the people's acceptance a great deal more. "All bishops and preachers must instruct the people to believe the whole Bible, and the three Creeds—that made by the Apostles, the Nicene, and the Athanasian—and interpret all things according to them, and in the very same words, and condemn all heresies contrary to them, particularly those

condemned by the first four general councils." Thus, while the Bible was acknowledged to be the rule of faith, it was not kept entirely apart in its supremacy from the mere compositions of men. It could not be trusted to go alone into the churches and homes of Englishmen.

The assumption, too, that there must be a constituted human authority to interpret the Scriptures was of course fatal to the rights of conscience. Practically it meant the substitution of an Anglican popedom for the popedom of Rome, which had been repudiated. The operations of reason and of faith were limited still by external authority. Men must be compelled to uniformity of creed and practice in religious matters. The rights of conscience might be as flagrantly disregarded under the supremacy of the King as under the Pope. These rights were but little understood, and there would be many a weary struggle and many a martyr's agony before they would win due recognition and respect.

The Protestant Reformers claimed liberty of conscience, and many of them nobly died rather than be faithless to their convictions of truth. They who claim liberty of conscience for themselves, however, should be prepared to grant it to all others. This lesson the Reformers had not learned. Poor Dutch Baptists, for instance, found this out to their cost. Royal proclamations drove them homeless from the country in the winter's cold, or consigned them to the stake if they ventured to remain. One of the best of the bishops told how bravely and exultantly they suffered, but he had no word of sympathy or regret for their pitiable fate. "It was complained of them that they drew their 'damnable errors' from the indiscreet use of the Scrip-

tures." Their conscience was not respected. It is right to mention these lowlier sufferers for conscience and for Christ, whose names have little space in the pages of history. The treatment they received may remind us that the battle for religious freedom had but just begun when Protestantism became dominant in the country.

It has not been necessary to relate the thrilling story of the fiery trial through which the Reformation passed in the reign of Queen Mary. One briefest reference to it shall be my closing word. I suppose the central point of its painful interest is at Oxford, where so many of the religious movements of the country have had their source—at Oxford, where at one stake are fastened the most learned bishop and the greatest preacher of the English Church of their time—while Cranmer, in a prison near, is awaiting the doom which, when it falls, will strike dismay into the hearts of those who inflict it. There at the stake is spoken the prophecy of the long grim tragedy, as old Latimer says to his comrade Ridley, "Be of good comfort: we shall this day light such a candle in England as I trust, by God's grace, shall never be put out."

Thus whilst, at Oxford and Smithfield and elsewhere, Rome kept flashing a red danger light which should warn all future generations off her track, martyrs, by their constancy in suffering, were holding aloft bright examples to stir mankind to that moral heroism which fidelity to conscience may at any time demand.

When we look back upon the sixteenth century, and are filled with admiration at the splendid courage of the martyrs, we remember that they only saw in part and prophesied in part. It is not the final "no" which their agony expresses.

It is only a fragment of reformation for which they are content to die. Theirs is the starting-point of progress, not its goal. The light they kindle shows England the way to larger freedom and a simpler faith. The mission of Nonconformity has begun, and the day of the Church's emancipation will certainly dawn.

“ By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding feet I track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the cross that turns not back,
And these mounts of anguish number how each generation learned
One new word of that grand *Credo* which in prophet-hearts hath
burned
Since the first man stood God-conquered with his face to heaven
upturned.”

II

THE GROWTH OF ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY IN THE PURITAN STRUGGLE

A bishop in advance of his times—The Puritan appears—Strength and weakness—The Presbyterian attack on Episcopacy—Erastianism—"Prophesyings"—The Queen and her bishops—Fetters—"A congregation of faithful men"—Gathered churches and the rule of Christ by His Spirit—Brownists and Baptists—"Stiff knees"—A theological gladiator made Primate—Congregational martyrs—The farce at Hampton Court—"No bishop, no king"—"Divine right"—"The pack of Puritans"—Westminster Assembly—Across the sea—New intolerance—The vanguard of liberty—Conscience *versus* caste—The king of Puritanism—"Triers"—The poet's vision—England's chief, Christ's servant.

"SEEING that Christ doth govern His Church always by His Holy Spirit, and bindeth all the ministers thereof unto the sole Word of God, what abomination is this, that any Bishop of Rome, Hierusalem, Antioche, or elsewhere, should acclaim to be Christ's Vicar in the earth, and take upon him to make any laws in the Church of God to bind the conscience of man, beside the Word of God." These are the words of John Hooper, the martyr Bishop of Gloucester. In the same treatise he distinctly affirms that the authority of the civil magistrate "is not to be admitted in the Church." He further writes, "As touching the supreme powers of the earth, it is not unknown unto all them that readen and

marked the Scriptures, that it appertaineth nothing unto their office to make any law to govern the conscience of their subjects in religion, but to reign over them in this case as the Word of God commandeth."

These are sound Nonconformist principles, and they were taught by a man whose popularity as a preacher was second only to that of Hugh Latimer. One wonders that such a man could ever have been a bishop of the Established Church. It was no easy thing for him to accept the office. When the offer was made to him he declined it. His admiration for the youthful King Edward VI. made it difficult to say "No ;" but he said it, because there was that in the oath which he regarded as profane, and he had scruples of conscience concerning the vestments as being remnants of Popery. The oath was altered by the King's own hand to meet Hooper's objection, and His Majesty would have dispensed with the vestments also. That was not to be, however, and for nine months Hooper refused to be consecrated. The Church authorities would neither let him decline the bishopric, nor yield to him respecting the vestments, and they sent him to prison. In the end there was a compromise.

Had the sentiments of Hooper been generally entertained in the Church, its days as an Establishment would have been numbered. No State Church in the world could bear the strain involved in the working out of those great spiritual principles. Whatever Hooper might say, the standard of authority and the rights of conscience had only the position in the English Church which royalty deemed it fitting to assign them. "Christ doth govern His Church always by His Holy Spirit," said Hooper. "The King's Majesty

justly and rightfully is and ought to be the supreme head of the Church of England," said the statute law.

Yet the principles Hooper avowed, and others inseparable from them, would one day be widely accepted in England, and to observe their progress is to watch the growth of Nonconformity.

When Elizabeth ascended the throne, and Protestantism was re-established, there existed a party intent on further reformation, which was able to make itself felt. The men who composed it were presently styled Puritans. It was a good name when seriously applied, and not robbed of its goodness when scornfully uttered. Taunts often recoil on those who fling them forth. There was genuineness enough in Puritanism to render harmless the sneers of the frivolous and the impure.

Daniel Neal, the historian of the Puritans, in comparing their sentiments with the principles upon which the Established Church was based, among other things says this—"It was agreed by all that the Holy Scriptures were a perfect rule of faith; but the bishops and court reformers did not allow them a standard of discipline or Church government, but affirmed that our Saviour and His Apostles left it to the discretion of the civil magistrate, in those places where Christianity should obtain, to accommodate the government of the Church to the policy of the State. But the Puritans apprehended the Holy Scriptures to be a standard of Church discipline as well as doctrine, at least that nothing should be imposed as necessary but what was expressly contained in, or derived from, them by necessary consequence. And if it should be proved that all things necessary to the well government of the Church could not

be deduced from Holy Scripture, they maintained that the discretionary power was not vested in the civil magistrate, but in the spiritual officers of the Church." It is not necessary now to refer to other differences which Neal mentions, for that indicated in the passage quoted appears to be inclusive of them. It certainly is of fundamental importance, and contains the justification of various Puritan contentions, which we may presently notice. One other quotation from Neal must, however, be made: "Both parties agreed too well in asserting the necessity of an uniformity of public worship, and of using the sword of the magistrate for the support and defence of their respective principles, which they made an ill use of in their turns, whenever they could grasp the power into their hands. The standard of uniformity, according to the *bishops*, was the *Queen's supremacy* and the *laws of the land*; according to the *Puritans*, the *decrees of provincial and national synods*, allowed and enforced by the civil magistrate; but neither party were for admitting that liberty of conscience and freedom of profession which is every man's right, as far as is consistent with the peace of the civil government he lives under."

These two passages exhibit the *strength* and the *weakness* of the Puritan position. In adherence to Scripture, in the rejection of tradition, in the repudiation of secular interference in questions of Church government the Puritans were strong. But in assuming the need for uniformity in public worship, in using the sword of the magistrate to secure it, and in denying to others the liberty of conscience they claimed for themselves, the Puritans were weak. We shall see their strong and their weak points illustrated in action, and in their ranks the rise of a party with clearer

views and larger charity. When Queen Elizabeth and Archbishop Parker, as already related, put an end to the freedom which the Puritan clergy had used in respect to vestments and ceremonies, and when they closed the lips of those preachers who for conscience' sake left the Establishment, it was natural that the ecclesiastical system under which this cruel persecution was possible should be keenly scrutinised and vigorously assailed.

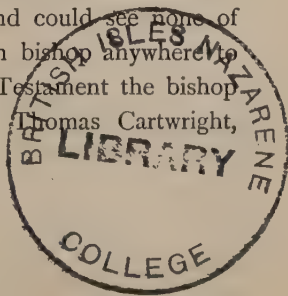
Small concessions may retain men in a Church who are loth to leave it, but when these are denied them, and they are forced out, loyalty to conscience making separation imperative, they are likely to find other questions, which they have rather tried to suppress, assume in their minds larger proportions than they did before. If concessions had been made to the Puritan clergy they would have remained in the Church. Why were they not made? Listen to Bishop Jewell, and no better man sat on the Episcopal bench at that time. "The contest . . . respecting the linen surplice is not yet at rest. The matter still somewhat disturbs weak minds, and I wish that all, even the slightest, vestiges of Popery might be removed from our churches, and, above all, from our minds. But the Queen, at this time, is unable to endure the least alteration in matters of religion." Mr. Skeats says that Bishop Jewell compared the vestments to actors' dresses. Several of the bishops derided them, and one said that they "came from hell." The people treated them with contumely, and the archbishop himself gloried in not having worn them at his own consecration.

The wearing of this robe or that may appear to us a trivial matter, but we need to look carefully into all the

circumstances before we pronounce it to be so. It is not for us hastily to describe as weakness a resistance which costs men great privation and pain. If the thing imposed be a trifle and no more, what are we to say of the cruel imposition of an unnecessary trifle? Surely it cannot be mere wilfulness that inflicts these pains and penalties. Yet that obnoxious imputation can only be avoided by treating the seeming trifle as of serious significance. The flag of a regiment or the standard of an army may be in itself an unimportant piece of rag, but no one so regards it as it flies in the wind, the symbol of all the army is and all it means to dare.

The vestments were retained. Her Majesty willed it so, and some of the best ministers in the Church were sacrificed in consequence. No wonder that Puritan opinion in respect to ecclesiastical abuses should ripen and show itself in persistent efforts for further reformation. That was the Puritan struggle during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Very ineffectual it seemed to be, but not unfruitful, one thinks, in preparation for the times that were coming.

When the Puritans were persecuted by the bishops they promptly looked into the claims of Episcopacy to a place in the Church of God, and as a consequence they rejected them. Who were these bishops "lording it over the charge allotted to" them in a manner the Apostle Peter deprecated? Whence came the whole array of ecclesiastical dignitaries—archdeacons, deans, chapters, and the like? The Puritan looked into his Bible and could see none of them mentioned, nor was a diocesan bishop anywhere to be found in its pages. In the New Testament the bishop was simply a presbyter or elder.



Margaret professor of divinity at Cambridge, was the leader of the Puritan assault on the hierarchy. "He began about 1570 to inculcate the unlawfulness of any form of Church government except what the Apostles had instituted, namely, the Presbyterian."

Thus Puritanism gave Episcopacy notice to quit, a notice to be executed at another day. It will be observed that the Puritan chose high ground from which to deliver his attack. The bishops as yet had made no claim to any Divine right for their office. Episcopacy was neither with them nor their adherents a Divine institution. It was no more than an expediency. Bishops were supposed to be useful and necessary. High Anglicanism was not then born. It is well to remember that in the claim for Divine right Episcopalians in England were not first in the field. We think they will not be the last.

Furthermore, these unscriptural prelates were the exponents of a miserably poor ecclesiastical system, commonly called Erastianism, after a certain Thomas Erastus, a German physician, who in the sixteenth century published a theory of Church government which placed all ecclesiastical power in the hands of the civil ruler. Whilst Erastus was propounding his views in Germany, the Queen and her bishops were illustrating them in England. "The Bishops were but the tools of the State," says Mr. Child; and he adds, "in this particular department more than any other Elizabeth herself was the State." In quoting Mr. Child's words no reflection on the conscientiousness of the bishops is intended. They were mostly the willing instruments of the Queen. If they crossed her purpose, however, it was at their peril. Under the Tudors the subserviency of the Church to the

Crown was complete. We do well to cherish the sentiment expressed by Dr. Watts in the lines we sometimes sing—

“ Let Cæsar’s due be ever paid
To Cæsar and his throne ;
But consciences and souls were made
To be the Lord’s alone.”

The Tudor sovereign, however, in a manner as obnoxious to the Puritans as to us, was not satisfied unless the “consciences and souls” of the people were under the royal sway. Henry VIII. was pope in everything but in name, and during the long reign of Elizabeth there was consistent adherence to the Erastian lines, on which the new Church Establishment had been commenced. Illustrations of this are not far to seek. A notable one is afforded in the suppression of an institution called “prophesyings,” which was in favour with the clergy in different parts of the country. “They met,” says Mr. Hallam, “at appointed times to expound and discuss together particular texts of Scripture, under the presidency of a moderator appointed by the bishop, who finished by repeating the substance of their debate, with his own determination upon it. These discussions were in public, and it was contended that this sifting of the grounds of their faith and habitual argumentation would both tend to edify the people, very little acquainted as yet with their religion, and supply in some degree the deficiencies of learning among the pastors themselves.” Free speech, however, is always distasteful to those who exercise arbitrary power. There was room in the “prophesyings” for the utterance of inconvenient truths, and probably the opportunity was sometimes used. The Queen determined that the prophesyings should cease,

and Archbishop Parker proceeded to carry out the royal order. The Bishop of Norwich objected to this high-handed procedure. Certain privy councillors sustained him in his objection. They wished the prophesyings to be continued. But Parker was firm. He died, however, in 1575, and was succeeded in the archbishopric by Grindal, who, believing in the value of the prophesyings, refused to suppress them. Whereupon the Queen took the matter into her own hands, dealt directly with the bishops herself, sequestered the archbishop, and confined him to his house. The poor man remained in disgrace till within a short time of his death in 1583.

Grindal's treatment is not the only instance of the drastic measures which "the supreme governor of the Church" employed in dealing with "right reverend fathers in God." When Fletcher, the Bishop of London, married "a fine lady and a widow," the Queen of her own authority forthwith suspended him. Sir Christopher Hatton, a royal favourite, proceeding to build his house in the Bishop of Ely's garden in Holborn, found his Lordship by no means agreeable to the usurpation. Sir Christopher's patroness thereupon penned the following elegant epistle: "Proud prelate, you know what you were before I made you what you are: if you do not immediately comply with my request, by G— I will unfrock you.—ELIZABETH." When Bishop Aylmer "preached too vehemently against female vanity in dress, which came home to the Queen's conscience, she told her ladies that if the bishop held more discourse on such matters she would fit him for heaven; but he should walk thither without a staff, and leave his mantle behind him."

What are we to think of a Christian Church in such bondage to the secular government as these facts indicate? To the Puritans it was a sorry spectacle. It is so to us also. The Puritans were not anti-state Churchmen. They did not, as we have observed, object to the employment of the secular arm in ecclesiastical matters, only it must be as servant and not as master that the civil ruler stepped in. Cartwright vigorously maintained that the secular government ought to be the obedient servant to execute the orders of what he considered a Scriptural Church, and he pitched his contention in a high key of ecclesiastical assumption. Neither he nor his friends saw, as we see, that state-churchism in every form is injurious to religion. We, of course, adopt the Puritan protest as far as it goes, but we issue it in an expanded form.

Admitting Queen Elizabeth's treatment of her bishops to be an extreme exhibition of Erastianism, we do not forget that every diocesan bishop in the English Church to-day holds his office as the nominee of the government. The dean and chapter never fail to elect the man whom the Crown nominates. They dare not refuse to do so. As a consequence of their political origin the conduct of the Episcopal bench in Parliament betrays a lack of that freedom and courage which one would like to see, and ought to see, in ministers of the Christian religion. In fact the record of the bishops in Parliament is a sufficient condemnation of the system under which they hold their seats. When they have mustered strongly it has not been on behalf of any great question of national justice or humanity, but for much inferior purposes. It has been vain to look for the closing of their ranks to confront a powerful govern-

ment in a warlike policy, or to achieve any great deliverance for the miserable and the oppressed. Mr. Wilberforce's complaint early in the century, that in the conflict for the suppression of the slave trade, "the bishops as a body gave him no support," is simply symptomatic of the political virus which enfeebles their moral and spiritual power.

There are various ways in which the hand of the State is heavy upon the Church to which it is unnecessary to refer now. In our condemnation of Erastianism many Churchmen heartily concur. They feel the dishonour to the Church involved in it. The difference between them and us is this, they merely deplore what we refuse to tolerate. They wear the livery of the State, which our consciences compel us to decline. The fetters of the Establishment bind them, but we are free from that limitation.

In order to conform the constitution of the Church to the standard of the Scriptures, the Puritans not only sought to substitute the presbytery for the hierarchy, and to maintain the spiritual authority of the Church against the intrusion of the civil ruler, but they naturally desired also to secure purity of membership. "They lamented the want of *godly discipline*, and were uneasy at the promiscuous and general access of all persons to the Lord's table. The Church being described in her Articles as a *congregation of faithful persons*, they thought it necessary that a power should be lodged somewhere to inquire into the qualifications of such as desired to be of her communion." The Puritans apparently did not realise that the theory of "a congregation of faithful persons," whatever the Articles may say, is incompatible with a National Church Establishment,

and that inquiry into qualifications for communion is impracticable in connection with it.

The Puritans desired to render the Church a more spiritual community, with greater reality in its worship and ceremonies. Thus a liturgy, if allowed at all, should be subordinate to freer devotions. Responses should be less frequent and formal. Unmeaning and misleading phrases should be omitted from the marriage and burial services: a man should not declare he worshipped the woman of his choice with his body, according to the one, or be buried, according to the other, "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life," if he had been manifestly godless. Superstitious practices, such as signing the cross in baptism, should be avoided. Sponsorship in connection with the baptism of infants should be rejected in favour of a recognised responsibility for Christian training which would rest preferably on the parents of the child. All these things, and others not mentioned, are symptomatic of a reforming zeal which must languish and fade away, or ripen into robust Nonconformity.

Two of our Nonconformist principles, I have said, are indicated by the terms *gathered churches* and *the rule of Christ by His Spirit*. On these principles it will be suitable to give a few words of explanation now.

A visible Church, according to the New Testament, is composed of individuals whom the Lord our God has called to Him, and who have responded to the call. They have received the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost, without which there would be in them neither spiritual growth nor stability. Into this gathered assembly there may be unspiritual intruders. There may be hypo-

crites, or persons who are self-deceived. But all are professedly believers in Christ, and resolved to do His will. They are all "called to be saints." Being separated from the world, they are severally and collectively to be instrumental in saving it, as God shall give them opportunity and power. Our fathers laid stress on a converted membership, and we have not, it is to be hoped, lost our sense of its importance. Only as this principle is adhered to can the Church be truly described as "a congregation of faithful persons." Therefore our Nonconformity must continue. A gathered Church, as thus described, is obviously a totally different thing from a National Church, inclusive of men of all kinds of religious belief, and of none. If the former is scriptural the latter certainly cannot be so.

The rule of Christ by His Spirit is obviously a spiritual operation. Its exercise will be seen in its influence on the conduct of the members of the Church. Where they are simple-hearted, devoted, teachable, waiting on the Lord, and only desirous to know His will and do it, the reality of Christ's rule will be manifest. "The fruit of the Spirit" will appear, namely, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." On the other hand, the Holy Spirit may be grieved, and the rule of Christ be rejected by a self-willed membership. That which we call a Church may be no more than a company of ill-assorted people, having no bonds of spiritual fellowship to Christ or to one another, and then the term Church is a misnomer. Or it may be, as it ought to be, a gathering in the name of Christ, in the midst of which He is, and then it is the home of peace, and the centre of life-giving energies. The "gathered Church" may be worthy or un-

worthy of its name. It may be marked by a high-toned spirituality, or have only a name to live whilst it is dead. But in a State Church the intrusion of secular power and the action of worldly influences are inevitable. They are interwoven with the very constitution of the Church itself.

This principle of Church government involves conditions which are difficult of attainment, and by some may be deemed impossible. We are to remember that the Christ we serve is not lifeless, or impotent, or uninterested in our affairs. He has a very real and effective authority in earth as well as in heaven. It may be that the very difficulties incident to the operation of the rule of Christ in the assemblies where fallible mortals have their parts to play are part of the discipline necessary to fit the Church below for the society of the Church above. Be this as it may, our concern is with the scripturalness of our position, and its accordance with the mind of the great Head of the Church. It may be well for us to warn one another that Nonconformist principles can only be worthily worked out by men of a childlike spirit, and not by a selection of whimsical babies.

Whilst the principles of Nonconformity were being developed within the pale of the Establishment, Nonconformity properly so called was growing, and this is a convenient place for noting the fact. The Separatists were numerous in the days of Elizabeth. The people called Brownists held the principles of a converted membership and a Divine government in the Church of which we have been speaking. Robert Browne, after whom they were nicknamed, said that "The Church, planted and gathered, is a company, or number, of Christians and believers, which by a

willing covenant made with their God, are under the government of God and Christ, and keep His laws in one holy communion." The Brownists did not entirely reject the interference of the secular government in religious matters. Another set of Separatists, the Baptists, were in advance of them in this respect. Mr. Skeats remarks, "It is the singular and distinguished honour of the Baptists to have repudiated, from their earliest history, all coercive power over the consciences and the actions of men with reference to religion. No sentence is to be found in all their writings inconsistent with those principles of Christian liberty and willinghood which are now equally dear to all the free Congregational Churches of England." Mr. Skeats adds that as one "not connected with the Baptist denomination," he has, "perhaps, greater pleasure in bearing this testimony to undoubted historical fact." Dr. Robert Vaughan, writing of the Independents and the Baptists, says, "It would not, however, be easy to strike the balance of liberality between the two bodies. If the Baptists grew to be the most liberal in respect to toleration, according to law, it will, we suppose, be admitted, that the Independents were the most liberal in respect to the toleration which depends on personal feeling and opinion."

A good specimen of the Puritan mettle in Queen Elizabeth's reign is afforded by an incident which happened when the Articles of the Church were submitted to Parliament in order that they might be made binding on the clergy. Those relating to matters of faith excited no opposition, but on questions of Church government and ceremonies the Puritans were not so easily satisfied, and they succeeded in inserting a limitation in the terms

of subscription. Mr. Wentworth, "the most distinguished assertor of religious liberty in this reign," and others, were sent for by Archbishop Parker. This is how Mr. Wentworth describes the interview. "He asked us, 'why we did put out of the book the Articles for the Homilies, consecration of bishops, and such like?'—'Surely, sir,' said I, 'because we were so occupied in other matters that we had no time to examine them how they agreed with the Word of God.'—'What!' said he, 'surely you mistake the matter; you will refer yourselves wholly to us therein!'—'No; by the faith I bear to God,' said I, 'we will pass nothing before we understand what it is; for that were to make you popes: make you popes who list,' said I, 'for we will make you none!'" Mr. Hallam, from whom I have quoted Mr. Wentworth's account, remarks, "The intrepid assertion of the right of private judgment on one side, and the pretension to something like infallibility on the other, which have been for more than two centuries since so incessantly repeated, are here curiously brought into contrast."

Though the noble utterance of Mr. Wentworth proved to be no more than an ineffectual protest at the time, it takes its place in that long account which represents our debt of gratitude to the Puritans for the good fight they fought for civil liberty. They were the champions of those principles of freedom and justice which are now deemed inseparable from constitutional government. "Make you popes who list, for we will make you none."

" He had stiff knees, the Puritan,
That were not good at bending;
The homespun dignity of man
He thought was worth defending."

In 1583 Whitgift, Bishop of Worcester, the controversial antagonist of Cartwright, the leader of the Puritans, became Archbishop of Canterbury. With great ardour he at once entered upon the task of suppressing Puritanism. For men in power the application of force is a simpler process than mere reliance on argument. Whitgift had under his control the "tremendous machinery" of the Court of High Commission. He used his powers in an inquisitorial manner, alike un-English and inhuman, to the disgust of Lord Burleigh, who remonstrated with him in vain. Burleigh's disapproval of the extreme measures adopted by the bishops had already been communicated to the Queen. As a statesman, he saw the folly of driving men to desperation, whether they were Catholics or Puritans. He was no Puritan himself, but he testified concerning them that, "though they were over-squeamish and nice in their opinions, and more scrupulous than they need; yet, with their careful catechising and diligent preaching, they bring forth that fruit which your most excellent majesty is to desire and wish, namely, the lessening and diminishing the papistical numbers." Meanwhile Cartwright and his friends were endeavouring to carry out their Presbyterian methods, only to be stopped of course, but by a remarkable leniency to escape banishment or the galleys.

Obnoxious as the Puritans were to the Queen and the bishops, they were far too formidable a force in the country to be exterminated. On the contrary, according to Neal, they "increased prodigiously," and Whitgift himself "grew weary" of persecuting them. It must be remembered that, intent as they were on reformation, it was reformation within the Church that they sought. For the most

part they abjured the idea of separation from it, and would bear almost anything to avoid it. Then again the Queen's sovereignty was bound up with Protestantism, and her advisers knew well enough that the Puritans were the soundest Protestants of all.

"Between the years 1580 and 1593 the Brownists multiplied greatly." Two of their most eminent ministers were Henry Barrow and John Greenwood. "In 1586 they were summoned before Archbishop Whitgift. For a time released on bond, they continued their zealous labours, and were again committed to the Fleet in 1588. After suffering much injustice and cruelty, during five years' confinement in gaol, they were executed at Tyburn in the year 1593." Six weeks afterwards John Penry had a similar fate. Dr. Underhill remarks: "The fidelity and loyalty to the Queen of these sufferers for conscience' cause are beyond all question; their ignominious deaths were a sacrifice to the unholy zeal of prelates, whom worldly policy and power had blinded to the true nature of the Kingdom of Christ. The bishops cemented the stones of their building with the blood of better men." Imprisonment and banishment were the lot of many more.

When King James succeeded Queen Elizabeth, the Puritans thought the opportunity had come for obtaining some of the alterations they desired in the discipline and worship of the Church. They therefore greeted the new monarch with a petition to that effect, signed by upwards of eight hundred of their ministers. It was called "the millenary petition," from the supposition that it contained a thousand signatures. There had been some trepidation on the Episcopal bench at the prospect of the accession to the throne

of a Presbyterian Scotchman, and if some of His Majesty's public utterances were to be relied upon it was natural there should be some misgivings. It was the Puritan ranks, however, that were presently to be filled with dismay. His Majesty summoned a conference of the two parties to meet him at Hampton Court, in January 1604. He nominated all the members of the Conference himself, and the Puritans were only four against bishops and deans about eighteen strong. The only available report of what took place is that given by Dean Barlow. It is not regarded as fair to the Puritans, but it shows pretty clearly that the king contrived to change the Conference into a farce. James had an interview with the bishops and deans only on the first day. "His Majesty did that day wonderfully play the Puritan." The Church dignitaries were at first alarmed, but the King soon dispelled their fears. On the second day, when the Puritans were present, the King's part was evidently to brow-beat them rather than to give heed to anything they might say. I will quote a few of His Majesty's choice remarks ; and that we may the better see what manner of man the new head of the Church was, I will also quote some of the sentiments he had expressed in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church at Edinburgh, thirteen years previously, and which agreed with what he had professed in public up to the time of his succeeding to the English crown.

Behold King James, "standing with his bonnet off, and his hands lifted up to heaven." Hearken—"He praised God that he was born in the time of the light of the Gospel, and in such a place as to be king of such a Church, the sincerest [purest] kirk in the world. . . . As for our

neighbour kirk of England, their service is an evil-said mass in English; they want nothing of the mass but the liftings. I charge you, my good ministers, doctors, elders, nobles, gentlemen, and barons, to stand to your purity, and to exhort the people to do the same; and I forsooth, as long as I brook my life, shall maintain the same." That is James in the General Assembly at Edinburgh.

Now let us listen to him at Hampton Court. Dr. Raynolds was speaking. "The King broke out into a flame, . . . told the *ministers*, that he found they were aiming at a Scots presbytery, 'which (says he) agrees with monarchy as well as God and the devil; then *Jack* and *Tom*, *Will* and *Dick*, shall meet, and at their pleasure censure both me and my council. Therefore, pray stay one seven years before you demand that of me, and if then you find me pursy and fat, and my windpipe stuffed, I will perhaps hearken to you; for let that government be up, and I am sure I shall be kept in breath; but till you find I grow lazy, pray let that alone. I remember how they used the poor lady, my mother, in Scotland, and me in my minority.' Then turning to the bishops, he put his hand to his hat, and said, '*My lords*, I may thank you that these Puritans plead for my supremacy, for if once you are out and they in place, I know what would become of my supremacy—for, *no bishop, no king*. Well, doctor, have you anything else to offer?' Dr. Raynolds: '*No more, if it please your Majesty*.' Then rising from his chair, the King said, '*If this be all your party have to say, I will make them conform, or I will hurry them out of this land, or else worse;*' and he was as good as his word." The bishops and deans thought His Majesty was inspired. "*Ban-*

croft fell upon his knees, and said, 'I protest my heart melteth for joy, that Almighty God, of His singular mercy, has given us such a king, as since Christ's time has not been.' In a month old Whitgift, the archbishop, died, and Bancroft was appointed to the see of Canterbury in his place.

The name of Bancroft is associated with the rise of High Churchism in the English Establishment. In 1588 he preached a sermon at Paul's Cross, "in which he suggested, rather than asserted, the Divine right of bishops in the Church of England, thus, as he supposed, making good its position against the asserted Divine right of the Pope on the one hand, and of the Puritan 'discipline' on the other." Archbishop Whitgift is reported to have "said that he wished this were true, but could not believe it." The new position assigned to the Episcopate came to be widely accepted, and the bishops were marked off by Bancroft as "a superior order by *Divine right*, with the sole power of ordination, and the keys of discipline; so that from his time there were reckoned three orders of clergy in the *English* hierarchy, viz., *bishops, priests, and deacons*."

The demands of the Puritans at Hampton Court were very moderate indeed. They raised no objection to the royal supremacy, and they only asked for a few reforms. They were treated with scorn. Instead of reforms there was the royal proclamation for permitting sports on the Lord's Day when the morning service was over. The men who wanted something purer in religious worship and Church discipline had the King's "dancing-book" given them to read to their congregations. Surely it was adding insult to injury. The measures taken against the Puritan

clergy were as severe as the King and his counsellors dared to make them; but "the pack of Puritans," as James called them, gave him no little trouble. In the reign of his son Charles, as every one knows, there were graver issues still.

"No bishop, no king," said James, as he made his alliance with the Episcopate. Henceforth in the Stuart *régime* the Divine right of bishops and the Divine right of kings were to go together. Very costly doctrines to the country, and full of tragedy too, as was seen when the heads of Archbishop Laud and his royal master rolled on the scaffold. When the sword was drawn between King and Parliament it was quite plain that the struggle had to do with religious as well as civil liberty. At the beginning of the conflict the Parliament summoned to its aid "an assembly of godly and learned divines, to be consulted with by the Parliament, for settling the government and liturgy of the Church of England, and for vindicating and clearing the doctrine thereof from false aspersions and interpretations." This memorable assembly met at Westminster on the 1st of July 1643. It consisted of a hundred and twenty divines chosen by Parliament, with ten representatives of the House of Lords and twenty of the House of Commons. In the Assembly there were a few Episcopalians, who took little part in the proceedings, and a few Independents, at first only five or six, who made their influence felt. The great majority were Presbyterian in sentiment. Considerable ecclesiastical changes quickly followed the outbreak of hostilities. The Scotch Covenant, with modifications, was adopted. The Directory, with its large freedom for the officiating minister, was substituted for the Book of Common Prayer. The High Court of Commission was, of course,

abolished. There were painful sequestrations of the clergy, not in all instances to be approved, but in most for serious and substantial reasons. The ejection sanctioned by the Parliament was at least very different from that which Laud and his party had practised when they expelled men from their cures "for no greater sin than refusing to read the 'Book of Sports' from the pulpit, or to bow after a prescribed manner." Before the might of the Puritans the ancient hierarchy fell. Presbyterianism became dominant, quickly to develop an intolerance which was its ruin. This object-lesson, far from discouraging Nonconformists in their protest against state-churchism, greatly increases its force. It reminds them that worldly favouritism is fatal to ecclesiastical purity. Their protest is not limited to a particular form of state-churchism, but is directed against it in every form.

In 1614 there was printed a treatise entitled, "Religion's Peace; or, A Plea for Liberty of Conscience." It is said to be the earliest publication on the subject now in existence. The author was one Leonard Busher, a citizen of London, and a Baptist. His work was addressed to King James and the High Court of Parliament then sitting. This is a sample of what he had to say: "It is not only unmerciful, but unnatural and abominable, yea, monstrous for one Christian to vex and destroy another for difference and questions of religion. And though tares have overgrown the wheat, yet Christ will have them let alone till harvest, lest while you go about to pluck up the tares, you pluck up also the wheat with them; as your professors have done, who thought they had gathered up the tares and burned them, but you see now that they

have burned the wheat instead of the tares. Wherefore in all humility and Christian modesty, I do affirm that, through the unlawful weed-hook of persecution, which your predecessors have used, and by your Majesty and Parliament is still continued, there is such a quantity of wheat plucked up, and such a multitude of tares left behind that the wheat which remains cannot yet appear in any right visible congregation." And further, he pleads that "the King and Parliament may please to permit all sorts of Christians—yea, Jews, Turks, and pagans—so long as they are peaceable, and no malefactors, . . . which, if they be found to be, under two or three witnesses, let them be punished according to God's word."

In 1646, when the hierarchy fell and the Presbyterians were becoming intolerant, this treatise of the citizen of London was reprinted by one who shared the author's sentiments, with a special address to the Presbyterian reader. The Presbyterians are reminded of the persecuting career of Saul of Tarsus, and thus admonished: "You see how far mistaken zeal can go. Consider this, I beseech you. I know you are, especially you that are laymen, zealous as you think for God and His truth, as Paul was; but I hope there will a time come, and I wish it were now present, when in the midst of your heat and fervency, the glorious and shining brightness of love will appear in your hearts, like the light surrounding Paul going to Damascus, and the scales of ignorance and mistake will fall from your eyes. And then you will lament all the evil which, through weakness, you have brought upon your brethren. You will then blame your own zeal and importunity, and apply yourselves more cordially and constantly

to observe our Saviour's rule of equity, to do unto others what you would have others do unto you."

Whatever the number of Nonconformist communities existing in the country when the Civil War broke out, they fail to represent adequately the growth of Nonconformity thus far in the Puritan struggle. Devoted men and women who, for conscience' sake, refused to conform to the Established Church were continually leaving England for a freer clime. Some of them went in the first instance to Holland and afterwards to America. It is computed that fifty thousand had crossed the Atlantic. At any rate the New Englanders were numerous enough to be asked to send some of their scholars to represent them in the Assembly of Divines which the Long Parliament summoned to Westminster. Milton, in his own eloquent style, laments this draining away of the best blood of the country. "What numbers of faithful and freeborn Englishmen and good Christians have been constrained to forsake their dearest home, their friends and kindred, whom nothing but the wide ocean and the savage deserts of America could hide and shelter from the fury of the bishops. Oh, sir, if we could but see the shape of our dear mother England, as poets are wont to give a personal form to what they please, how would she appear, think ye, but in a mourning weed, with ashes upon her head, and tears abundantly flowing from her eyes, to behold so many of her children exposed at once, and thrust from things of dearest necessity, because their conscience could not assent to things which the bishops thought indifferent? What more binding than conscience? What more free than indifferency? Cruel then must that indifferency needs be, that shall violate the

strict necessity of conscience ; merciless and inhuman that free choice and liberty that shall break asunder the bonds of religion ! Let the astrologer be dismayed at the portentous blaze of comets and impressions in the air, as foretelling troubles and changes of states : I shall believe there cannot be a more ill-boding sign to a nation (God turn the omen from us !) than when the inhabitants, to avoid insufferable grievances at home, are enforced by heaps to forsake their native country."

The loss was truly great for England, but the men who left her laid foundation-stones of a great empire. They went that they might be free to worship God according to their consciences. Everywhere they founded churches which were mostly of the Independent or Congregational order. They had no conception what their going forth from England was to do for the future of the world. God had a meaning in their banishment large and beneficent, as that of their enemies was evil and ignoble.

The Westminster Assembly, as already stated, was mainly Presbyterian, with a small admixture of Episcopalian and Independent elements. The latter formed the vanguard of liberty of conscience, though as yet not having learned quite all that we see involved in that to-day. The Presbyterians were for maintaining their Divine right doctrine for the Presbytery. The Independents said if scripturalness constituted Divine right then Congregationalism was to be preferred. They simply wished, however, to "be tolerated side by side with the Presbyterians." The Parliament would not admit the Presbyterian doctrine of Divine right at all. The controversy in the Assembly between the Presbyterian majority and the Independents

concerning liberty of conscience was a vital issue, and was protracted over six months. The Presbyterians would yield nothing. They aimed at the establishment of Presbyterianism, and insisted upon uniformity. The Independents should have no toleration. It was "a grievous fault, and grievously" the Presbyterians had to answer for it. If the Independents could not secure the freedom for which they had taken up the sword they felt they must leave a land where "a base subjection of men's consciences to slavery" was to be the rule. Such an exodus was not to be. The power of the Independents was rapidly increasing, and the Presbyterians were not to have things all their own way. Men of their own party have cried shame on their intolerance.

For the Puritanism of toughest fibre and finest quality we must not look to the ranks of the Presbyterians. The great Puritan poet, and that other whom we may call Puritanism's king, both saw more clearly and grasped more firmly than most men of their time the principle we hold concerning liberty of conscience. That principle of course is twofold. We claim liberty of conscience for ourselves, and we are prepared to grant it fully to others. It took centuries for any considerable number of men to apprehend and act upon the principle in its entirety. And yet to grant to others the freedom he claims for himself is binding on every follower of Christ. "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely, according to conscience, above all liberties." So said Milton, whose magnificent pleadings for liberty on behalf of all men are amongst the noblest passages in English literature. That Milton should protest against Presbyterian intolerance in scathing

lines, "on the forcers of conscience under the Long Parliament," is only what might be expected.

"Because you have thrown off your prelate lord,
And with stiff vows renounced his Liturgy,
To seize the widow'd whore Plurality
From those whose sin ye envied, not abhorr'd ;
Dare ye for this abjure the civil sword
To force our consciences that Christ set free,
And ride us with a classic hierarchy,
Taught ye by mere A.S. and Rotherford ?
Men, whose life, learning, faith, and pure intent,
Would have been held in high esteem by Paul,
Must now be named and printed heretics,
By shallow Edwards, and Scotch what d'ye call ?
But we do hope to find out all your tricks,
Your plots and packing worse than those of Trent,
That so the Parliament
May with their wholesome and preventive shears,
Clip your phylacteries, though baulk your ears,
And succour our just fears,
When they shall read this clearly in your charge,
New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large."

There are disappointments in Puritanism on which we need not dwell. It is good to get a sight of it at its best if we can. Superficial views are common enough. To some people the Puritan is simply a creature made up of odd and disagreeable habits and whims. The soul of Puritanism they never care to inquire about. Now there may be extravagances and foibles in abundance. There may be uncouth phraseology, fanciful distinctions, and what seem like needless austerities. There may be narrowness and bigotry and cant in the Puritan ranks, for no associations of men in this world are secure against the intrusion of the hypocrite and the fool. The essence of Puritanism, however, the secret of its fervour and force,

that by which its mighty works are wrought, is not in any of these things. It is in the profound conviction and realisation of the relation of the individual man to his Maker. The chart of God is in the man's hand, and the call of God is in his soul. He is called to be a saint here and now. He is God's servant, God's child, an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ. For him are the "exceeding great and precious promises." The decrees of popes and kings and bishops, and even presbyteries, in spiritual matters must be approved by his understanding as agreeable to the Word of God, if they are to be binding upon his conscience. The tiara, the mitre, the diadem, with all the prestige and magnificence which they represent, are outweighed by one sure word from the thorn-crowned King to whom the man owes his redemption. Thus the Puritan conflict was becoming essentially a great struggle between the conscience of man and the assumptions of a caste.

"Man is more than Constitutions ; better rot beneath the sod,
Than be true to Church and State while we are doubly false to God !

"We owe allegiance to the State ; but deeper, truer, more
To the sympathies that God hath set within our spirit's core ;
Our country claims our fealty ; we grant it so, but then
Before man made us citizens, great Nature made us men.

"He's true to God who's true to man ; wherever wrong is done,
To the humblest and the weakest 'neath the all-beholding sun,
That wrong is also done to us ; and they are slaves most base,
Whose love of right is for themselves, and not for all their race."

These lines of Lowell's express the sentiments of that larger-minded Puritanism of which Milton was a most illustrious representative. There was another who in the crisis of conflict became the national leader, and second to

none in the long line of England's rulers, indeed far surpassing most of them in massive strength of character. It is too late in the day to speak disparagingly of Oliver Cromwell. Royalists and flunkies have done their worst with his bones and with his memory long ago. Since Thomas Carlyle gave to the world "Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches," opinion concerning the king of Puritanism has been revolutionised. The dust and dirt of centuries has been cleared away, and we have been enabled to see the man in his substantial greatness and goodness. As Carlyle says, "Oliver was not a man of falsehoods, but a man of truth; whose words do carry a meaning with them, and above all others of that time are worth considering."

My words about Cromwell must be very few. His government raised England to a position of respect amongst the nations which had become strange to her since the great Queen died. When the iron sceptre fell from the relaxed grasp of the last of the Tudors, James of Scotland thought to wield it; but no Stuart hand was equal to that task. Cromwell had the power, and with it combined a broad tolerance such as neither Stuart nor Tudor could understand.

Listen to these words contained in one of the Protector's speeches to Parliament: "Truly the 'judgment of truth,' it will teach you to be as just towards an Unbeliever as towards a Believer; and it's our duty to do so. I confess I have said sometimes, foolishly it may be, I had rather miscarry to a Believer than to an Unbeliever. This may seem a paradox: but let's take heed of doing that which is evil to either! Oh, if God fill your hearts with such

a spirit as Moses had, and as Paul had—which was not a spirit for believers only, but for the whole people! Moses, he could die for them; wish himself ‘blotted out of God’s Book.’ Paul could wish himself ‘accursed for his countrymen after the flesh:’ so full of affection were their spirits unto all. And truly this would help you to execute the judgment of truth, and of mercy also.” Furthermore, Oliver said: “And if the poorest Christian, the most mistaken Christian, shall desire to live peaceably and quietly under you—I say, if any shall desire but to lead a life of godliness and honesty, let him be protected.”

The Protector of England was the protector of tender consciences as far as lay in his power. He was the protector of the oppressed far and wide. Persecuted saints in Alpine valleys learned this, for the tyrant paused in his cruel rage at Oliver’s word, lest he should hear the thunder of England’s guns. “Under no English government,” says Macaulay, “had there been so little religious persecution.” We may add that if Cromwell could have had his way there probably would have been none. George Fox, discoursing to him on “the sufferings of Friends,” found a patient listener. Very suggestive is Fox’s description of the way in which Cromwell took leave of him after the first interview. “As I was turning he caught me by the hand, and, with tears in his eyes, said, ‘Come again to my house; for if thou and I were but an hour of a day together we should be nearer one to the other.’”

The man who held the highest office in the state in those days could not divest himself of responsibility in Church affairs, and Cromwell did not desire to do so. He longed to see England a Christian nation, and endeavoured so to

discharge the duties of his exalted position as best to promote that end. The purity of the Christian ministry was a matter of vital moment, and required, at that time especially, considerable attention. The Protector secured the appointment of a body of commissioners, by himself and his Council, to deal with it. These "Triers," being fallible men, no doubt made mistakes. They might be too strict in some directions, and too lax in others. Richard Baxter, by no means a too partial witness, admitted the value of their work, saying, "Yet, to give them their due, they did abundance of good to the Church. They saved many a congregation from ignorant, ungodly, and drunken teachers; that sort of men that intended no more in the ministry than to say a sermon, as leaders say their prayers, and so patch up a few good words together to talk the people to sleep with on Sunday, and all the rest of the week go with them to the ale-house."

In treating of the growth of Nonconformity in the Puritan struggle, it has been necessary to leave unnoticed as much as possible the course of political events. Hence, for instance, I have said nothing about that great Armada which the winds of heaven scattered in wild confusion upon our coasts, or the perils of Protestantism from the plottings of Rome. Nor have I described stirring Parliamentary controversies, or the storm of civil war which burst upon the land and raged so fiercely and so long.

The day of larger liberty which dawned for England when Cromwell took the helm of the State, was fitted to excite bright anticipations in many a patriotic heart. It seemed as if Milton's vision of a free and strong nation soaring skyward were to be verified. "Methinks I see

in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks ; methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam ; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain of heavenly radiance, while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms."

Liberty has its dangers. They should be faced and conquered—not evaded by a frightened relapse to slavery. The day of freedom may close in cloud and mist. It is good to have seen it, and to know that it will dawn again. The eagle may tire in her lofty flight, her wing be weary, and her heart be faint, but she may renew her youth, and surpass her past achievements in a sunnier sky.

And now, if I were asked to point to examples of the growth to which Nonconformity had attained in the middle of the seventeenth century, could I do better than name the man who saw the vision of national glory and the man who for a moment made it true? Those two great Puritans, John Milton and Oliver Cromwell, held the Nonconformist principles of which I have already spoken, and others of which I have yet to speak ; and I would like to explain the fact that the foremost man in all England was a true believer in that Christ who is the Theme of the Bible, the Lord of the Conscience, and the Head of the Church.

III

THE MATURITY OF ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY IN FREE CHURCH LIFE

Tender consciences—The Savoy—"The door so strait"—Exodus—
"Assent and consent" impossible—Persecuting laws—Worship
by stealth—White's "Black List"—Toleration—The door closed
—Union better than uniformity—Two deathbeds—Occasional
conformity—A deadly blow averted by a death—Apathy and
deadness—The Methodist revival—A philanthropist's risk—
"Consecrated cobblers"—Stirrings of life—No living on the past
—Christian willinghood—Throwing off a poison.

"WE do declare a liberty to tender consciences; and that no man shall be disquieted, or called in question, for differences of opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom; and that we shall be ready to consent to such an Act of Parliament as, upon mature deliberation, shall be offered to us, for the full granting that indulgence." These words of peace form part of the declaration of Charles II. at Breda, when he was about to cross over to England to assume the royal state. Whether Charles meant to keep his promise or not, and for a time it really seemed as if he did, he found the re-established Royalists in no mood to care about "liberty to tender consciences." They had been sedulously impressing their neighbours with the idea that all would be peaceable and pleasant when once the King came to his

throne; but with the accomplishment of the Restoration their tone altered. And thus it came to pass that "the word of a king" was again, according to Stuart fashion, "a delusion and a snare."

Without staying to speak of intervening events, and the alternations of hope and fear in Puritan breasts, I pass at once to the celebrated conference at the Savoy in 1661, when a Royal Commission of prelates and Presbyterian ministers met for the purpose of revising the Book of Common Prayer. Instead of the whole Conference entering upon an examination of the Prayer-Book, the bishops, saying they had no desire for alterations, insisted on the Presbyterians submitting their proposals in writing, and all at once. In due time this was done, and I will endeavour to give a brief representation of the "exceptions" agreed upon and presented, as obtainable from the full document.

The Presbyterians took the broad ground that "things of doubtful disputation" ought not to be made obligatory in the Liturgy. "To load our public forms," said they, "with the private fancies upon which we differ is the most sovereign way to perpetuate schism to the world's end." They urged that it was time to remove the remnants of Popery in the Prayer-Book, and complete the work which the earlier reformers had begun. They objected to fasting in Lent, and to the observance of saints' days. The wearing of a surplice by the minister, the sign of the cross in baptism, kneeling at the Lord's supper were deemed highly objectionable impositions. They wished all the lessons to be chosen from the Bible without admixture of the Apocrypha, and that the use of the Liturgy should in no wise exclude free prayer. Strong objection was taken to the

assumption in the services of the Church that all Churchmen were "regenerated, converted, and in an actual state of grace," and also to making communion three times a year obligatory on all parishioners, whatever their character might be. Suggestions were made in respect to various services with a view to the removal of erroneous representations, and in some instances serious errors were marked for correction. Notably was this so in the baptismal and burial services, in the form of absolution, and the teaching of the Catechism. Having been required, by the terms of the commission which appointed them, to "compare the present liturgy with the most ancient liturgies which have been used in the Church in the purest and most primitive times," the Presbyterians reported that they had been unable to "find any records of known credit, concerning entire forms of liturgy, within the first three hundred years, . . . nor any impositions of liturgies upon any national church for some hundreds of years after."

Thus the ministers presented their case. They had to deal, however, with hard and unyielding adversaries. The bishops could not, or would not, see any need for reform in the matters which pressed upon the Presbyterian conscience. They wrote their answer after considerable delay. It was marked by frigid intolerance, and a lofty obliviousness to all interests outside those of a dominant caste. The Presbyterians met it with a powerful rejoinder, but in vain. As the time of the Conference to end drew near, the bishops and the ministers met face to face. "We spoke to the deaf," says Baxter. A curious relic of those days exists in an old book in the Library of George Street Baptist Chapel, Plymouth. On blank pages in it is written what purports

to be an account the owner of the book had received in a letter from his friend, who had been present for four hours at the last meeting of the Conference. He describes the bishops and presbyters as seated together at a table, and mentions who they were. He then says, "Mr. Baxter did insist very rationally and conscientiously upon a forbearance, and a reformation of y^e comon prayer and ceremonies; but y^e Prelates would yield to nothing, but y^e whole Quorum of y^m entertained Mr. Baxter's reasonings wth hisses. I was sorry to heare Mr. Baxter yield so much to y^m, viz., y^t he could read y^e comon prayer, weare a surplice, kneele at y^e sacram^t, but he could not baptise wth the signe of the Crosse, nor subscribe."

Not only did no relief come from the Savoy Conference, but the powers in Church and State seemed bent on aggravating the pressure on the consciences of those who shrank from conformity. "The substitution of 'church' for 'congregation,' the specific mention of bishops, priests, and deacons, instead of a more general designation, the introduction of Bel and the Dragon into the calendar, and other similar alterations, though none of them new in principle, seemed designed to convince the Nonconformists that, *instead of any wish to admit them to further power or privilege within the Church, there was a distinct and settled desire to restrain and exclude them.*" The common procedure of the Episcopal party from the landing of Charles to the end of the Savoy Conference betrays a crafty policy to elicit how much the Presbyterians would yield, in order that the demand made on them might be large enough to ensure their ejection. The Bishop of London is credited with casting aside even the thin veil thrown over the

conspiracy, and bluntly saying, "Now we know their minds, we will make them knaves if they conform." And when it was subsequently said, "Pity you made the door so strait," the reply was, "Not at all; had we supposed so many would have conformed we would have made it straiter."

The Presbyterians fought the battle alone and lost it. What might have happened if they had been less disdainful of an alliance with the Independents one cannot tell. Evidently the Presbyterians would have been satisfied with very moderate privileges. They wanted an Establishment broad enough to include themselves, not objecting either to a moderate episcopacy or a benignant royal supremacy. The Independents held more advanced views by far on Christian liberty than the Presbyterians, but many of their ministers were incumbents in the National Church under the tolerant sway of Cromwell, and were well content to remain in a State Church if the secular government did not interfere with conscience and the law of Christ. Of those who had outgrown state-churchism altogether I do not for the moment speak.

On May 19, 1662, the Act of Uniformity received the royal assent, and on the 24th of August any minister who had not previously subscribed to it had to leave his charge. With a refinement of cruelty the date was fixed a little before the yearly tithe was due, and consequently many a nonconforming incumbent went forth from his parsonage house a pauper into the cold world.

I cannot enter into the well-worn arguments concerning this ejectment as compared with others, but must content myself with a sentence or two from Dr. Robert Vaughan's

valuable work on "English Nonconformity." "It may be said that in all this they were only reaping as they had sown. But the case was not so. The sequestered clergy in the late times were displaced as being immoral, incompetent, or as state-church ministers who would give no pledge of allegiance to the State. But no charge of this nature was brought against the men ejected in 1662. No man whose opinion is entitled to the least consideration will question the general piety of these men. In regard to competency, it was their strength in that respect, and not their weakness, which made them so obnoxious; and there was not a man among them who was not prepared to bind himself by oath to all the duties of a good subject. The conformity which had been imposed by means of the Directory was light as air compared with that imposed by the 'unfeigned assent and consent' of 1662, and by the clauses which embraced reordination and passive obedience. Compared with these provisions, even the League and Covenant, as it was adopted in England, becomes comparatively liberal. No fifth, moreover, from his former cure was to pass to the hands of the ejected, under Charles II., and no office of tutor or schoolmaster was to be open to him."

"We will make them knaves if they conform," said the Bishop of London. About 2000 English clergymen saw the thing in that light. They refused to incur any such opprobrium. The exponents of Divine truth should be above suspicion. In fidelity to conscience they suffered the loss of all things. They brought poverty and privation upon those whom they loved the most, rather than dishonour their Lord by declaring their "unfeigned assent

and consent" to what they did not believe. They renounced work that was dearer to them than life rather than attempt to do it under false pretences. We honour their memory. Some of our principles they did not hold, but the Nonconformity which cost them so much added wealth to the inheritance which through the centuries has been accumulating for us.

The ejected in Devon numbered 137, of whom ten were in Exeter. One of them, in his farewell sermon at St. John's, on the 17th of August, said, "I beg that you would not interpret our Nonconformity to be an act of unpeaceableness and disloyalty. We will do anything for His Majesty but sin. We will hazard anything for him but our souls. We hope we could die for him; only we dare not be damned for him. We make no question, however we may be accounted of here, we shall be found loyal and obedient subjects at our appearing before God's tribunal."

That some of the men who conformed in 1662 should have done so is strange, and that clerical subscription should be possible to Evangelical men to-day is to some of us a perplexity also. It is not for us to judge their consciences, but we may express the fear that English national character is injuriously influenced by a formal subscription to the Prayer-Book on the part of men who have no more belief in portions of its contents than had the ejected ministers of 230 years ago.

When Nathaniel Heywood was leaving his living at Ormskirk in Lancashire, a poor man came to him, saying, "Ah! Mr. Heywood, we would gladly have you preach still in the church."—"Yes," said he, "I would as gladly preach as you can desire it, if I could do it with a safe

conscience." The man replied, "Oh, sir, many a man now-a-days makes a great gash in his conscience: cannot you make a little nick in yours?" Thank God, 2000 men refused to make even "a little nick" in their consciences. It is an inspiration to us to know it.

As each one of us, however, must give account of himself to God, let us note some things that were rejected by the Presbyterians (not to speak of the Independents and more advanced Nonconformists), for these may in themselves afford reasons for our continued nonconformity. My illustrations will relate to three matters only, viz., the Baptismal and Burial Services, and the form of absolution.

In respect to absolution, the Presbyterians objected to the phrase, "I absolve thee," and proposed to substitute "I pronounce thee absolved, if thou dost truly repent and believe." Thus the idea of priestly prerogative is excluded, and the danger of encouraging false confidence is averted. Obviously there is an important principle involved in this change.

To the teaching of the Prayer-Book respecting the ordinance of baptism the Puritans had objections which we Nonconformists share, though the reasons for our objections may not be altogether identical. I am speaking now, of course, of principles common to the Free Churches, apart from the particular views any of them may entertain.

The Church requires the presence of sponsors, and they are asked, "Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of this world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them? Answer: I renounce them all." After

this the minister asks concerning faith in God and Christ and the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Catholic Church, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, &c. And the answer required is, "All this I steadfastly believe." The minister then further asks, "Wilt thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?" To which, on behalf of the infant, entirely unconscious of all these solemn questions and promises, the sponsor has to say, "I will." Now the Puritans at the Savoy Conference objected to sponsorship, and said substantially that those who bring a child to baptism should speak for themselves. We say that too. In our view the whole system of sponsorship is alien to the Christian faith. "Assent and consent" to it are impossible to us.

After the rite of baptism has been performed, the priest says, "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that *this child* is by Baptism regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits; and with one accord make our prayers unto Him, that *he* may lead the rest of *his* life according to this beginning." And again the priest says, "We yield Thee most hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate *this infant* with Thy Holy Spirit, to receive *him* for Thine own *child* by adoption, and to incorporate *him* into Thy holy Church." Then, in the Catechism, the child is taught to refer to his baptism thus: "Wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." The Presbyterians objected to these statements of an inward change which could not be verified. We Nonconformists

feel strongly the unscripturalness of this doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. We say it has no foundation in the Word of God, and regard it as the source of soul-destroying delusion. "Assent and consent" to a Prayer-Book containing such teaching as this we can never give, whether we practise infant baptism or not.

The Burial Service was obnoxious also to the Presbyterians because of the indiscriminate use of certain expressions. "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground ; . . . in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." In the first prayer the priest says, "We give thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world," &c. And in the last the desire is expressed "that when we depart this life, we may rest in Him (Christ) as our hope is this our brother doth." How can we acquiesce in the indiscriminate use of these confident assertions if we believe in the teaching of Christ concerning distinctions in human character and their issues? We say with the Presbyterian ministers, "These words may harden the wicked, and are inconsistent with the largest rational charity." Again "assent and consent" must be refused.

It is strange that the "assent and consent" which we conscientiously refuse can be given by any men who preach the same Gospel that our ministers preach. Yet Evangelical clergymen teach a child that in his baptism he "was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." They tell him as he grows up that unless he repent and believe on Christ he cannot be

saved. And if he die impenitent and unbelieving they yet bury him "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life."

There is a great gulf fixed between such teaching as this and that of all the Protestant Nonconformist Churches in the land. The Evangelical clergy may come to us, but we cannot go to them. It is right to make every allowance for the influences of early associations to prevent the perception of the glaring inconsistency we have described, but Nonconformists are without excuse if they lightly abandon their position, and enter a Communion where such contradictions can be perpetuated.

The Act of Uniformity, bad as it was, represents only a part of the legislative cruelty inflicted on God-fearing men of tender conscience in those evil days. It was preceded by the Corporation Act, and was followed by the Conventicle Acts, the Five Mile Act, and the Test Act. By this fearful series of persecuting measures it was intended to exterminate Nonconformity. In a few words the provisions of these statutes must now be related.

The Corporation Act was passed in 1661. It required that every mayor, alderman, and councillor, and every servant of a corporation should, in addition to the oath of allegiance and supremacy make the declarations against the Solemn League and Covenant and in favour of passive obedience under pain of instant removal from office. The Act also provided that no one in the future should be eligible for election unless he had within the year received the Sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England.

The first Conventicle Act was passed in 1664. It was

avowedly to confirm a statute of the reign of Elizabeth which had become obsolete, and it was enacted for a term of years. The second Conventicle Act was passed in 1670, and was intended to be permanent. These Acts subjected to penalties every person over the age of sixteen who should attend any religious service other than allowed by the Liturgy or practice of the Church of England, where more than five persons beyond the members of the household were present. Under the first Act the penalties were fines such as it would be very difficult to pay, or imprisonment, and for a third offence transportation. Under the second Act there was a system of fines, the bare statement of which will suffice to show the hard grinding way in which our Nonconformist ancestors were dealt with. Attendance at a conventicle (that is, where five more than the household were assembled) involved a fine of five shillings for the first offence, and ten shillings for each subsequent conviction. The preacher was liable to a fine of twenty pounds the first time, and forty pounds afterwards. The owner of the house, or outhouse, or yard, or barn where the meeting was held was liable to a fine of twenty pounds. The fines were recoverable by distraint. If any convicted worshipper was too poor to pay, others who had been convicted could be distrained upon for his fine as well as their own. If the minister's goods would not meet the cruel demands of the law, or he should have gone away beyond its reach, the hearers could be distrained upon for their teacher's fine, in that case not exceeding ten pounds each. To this it must be added that the constable, headborough, tithingman, churchwarden, or overseer of the poor who knew of a conventicle and did not give information to a justice

of the peace or chief magistrate was to be fined five pounds for every offence, and the magistrate who failed to carry out the Act was to pay one hundred pounds for his leniency.

Hard on the first Conventicle Act followed the Five Mile Act in 1665, by which the ejected Nonconformists and all other Nonconformist preachers were prohibited from coming, unless only in passing on the road, within five miles of any city or corporate town or borough sending members to Parliament, "upon forfeiture for every such offence the sum of forty pounds of lawful English money." And no one who did not take the oath of passive obedience and regularly attend the Established Church was permitted to teach any public school, or take any boarders for instruction, under penalty for every offence of forty pounds. Moreover, the oath concerning passive obedience might, if the magistrate so willed, be administered to an offender, and if he refused to take it six months' imprisonment was the punishment.

The Test Act, which was passed in 1673, shut out Nonconformists, whether Romanists or Protestants, from all Government employment—civil, military, and naval.

The period of twenty-eight years during which the last two Stuart kings reigned was one of terrible suffering to our Nonconformist forefathers. They had to prove amidst many and grievous afflictions the reality of their faith and the constancy of their love. To read their story may make us almost doubt if we know what Christian faith and love are. In 1665 the plague was ravaging London, and many of the clergy left their flocks and fled. Ejected ministers bravely entered the vacant pulpits and preached the Gospel

to the dying congregations. As if to combine the grotesque and the barbarous, Parliament passed the Five Mile Act! In those evil years the people, bereaved of their pastors, hungered for the bread of life. The pastors put themselves in jeopardy to minister, if ever so little, to their flocks. Woods and solitary places were witnesses to times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, when in the hours of the night poor people joined in worship who dare not meet by day. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." So spake the Master, and some of us have looked with deep emotion on strange places in England where, in the days of the Five Mile Act, that gracious assurance was verified in the experience of poor persecuted disciples. "Nothing was more common," says Dr. Vaughan, "than for men to be arrested and committed to prison without knowing the cause of such proceedings. To be shut up in jails with ordinary felons was their common experience. Nor was that the worst. The numbers crowded together; the filth, added to confinement in a close atmosphere; and the wretched prison fare, to men little familiar with such privation and suffering, not only impaired health, but often extinguished life. The suffering, too, it must be remembered, came not on men only, but on women and children. It was no rare thing to see the husband and the father rudely torn from his wife and children in the dead of night. In the family of the ejected or silenced minister, life was a hard struggle while the good man was with them, but what was it likely to be when he was thrust into prison, and detained there, as was often the case, not for months merely, but for years? And what were the

homes which often witnessed such scenes? Homes among strangers—distant five miles at least from any place where the services of the minister, whether in town or country, had made him friends. How were such men to pay heavy fines? How were they to promise obedience to the injunction, you must not preach? Sentence on them in that form was a sentence of hopeless imprisonment.”

“Mr. Jeremy White, a Nonconformist minister, made a careful collection of the names of persons who had suffered for their Nonconformity under Charles II. Sixty thousand names are said to have been included in his list, and five thousand are reported to have died from their sufferings.”

The period of gloom was occasionally broken by gleams of sunshine, all too faint and feeble, and yet highly prized. More than once when King Charles was minded to concede some liberty to his Nonconformist subjects he was thwarted by Parliament. Yet some slight relief ensued. His Majesty's Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, though speedily withdrawn, was welcomed as a substantial boon. Prisons were emptied, and thousands of licences for Nonconformist places of worship were granted. It was then John Bunyan came forth from his twelve years' captivity, and, says Mr. Skeats, “was the first Nonconformist minister licensed to preach in England.” There were days when the Parliament and the hierarchy were somewhat softened towards Protestant Nonconformists, being forced to acknowledge the singular disinterestedness of their devotion to that national liberty of which they had received so scanty an allowance. It is said that King James offered a thousand guineas to Jeremy White for his black list, that he might make use of it against the clergy. But the sturdy Noncon-

formist preferred to destroy it. Daniel De Foe appealed boldly to the bishops to say if it were not true that Mr. White had kept back the record lest Popery should profit by it, and whether they had not thanked him for so doing, and offered a pecuniary recompense, which he had very properly declined to receive.

I wish I had time to dip into the extant records of some of our old churches, and give a sample of the many pathetic incidents they contain. Mingled with them, too, are things that are comical, except for the grim tragedy which lies behind them all. They tell us, for instance, of the schemes devised for baffling informers and policemen : a curtain let down in the middle of a room which only trusty friends may pass, but which will allow informers, if they come, to hear but not see the preacher ; women squatting on the stairs, that constables may find entrance a work of time ; a psalm, agreed upon beforehand, that when the danger-signal is given all present may rise and sing, and the enemy thus fail to identify the preacher ; a hole in the wall, or a trap-door provided, that the hunted evangelist may the more easily escape.

When the days of Stuart misrule had ended, and William and Mary ascended the throne, two things speedily happened which deeply affected the fortunes of Nonconformity. The first was the passing of "An Act for exempting their Majesties' Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties of certain laws." The conditions of exemption were substantially these—the oaths of allegiance and supremacy must be taken ; transubstantiation must be repudiated ; ministers must accept most of the Articles of the Church of England. There was

an accommodation to the special views of Baptists and Quakers. And then, so long as the doors of the conventicle were not bolted and barred, and the meetingers paid their tithes and other ecclesiastical dues, they might assemble to worship God according to their consciences, and pay their own expenses, and escape the penalties of the persecuting laws, which still remained on the statute-book to be used as required. This measure of relief came to be popularly called the Toleration Act. It was a boon then, but the very name is an insult to half the nation now. There are persons, I suppose, who still think that to be tolerated is all that Nonconformists ought to desire. One of our minor objections to a State Church is, that it is apt to make one set of Englishmen forget their manners in this way. There is a comical side to the question too, and perhaps those who talk of tolerating their fellow-countrymen may lack the sense of humour as well as the sense of propriety. In any case toleration in religious matters ought not to be so much as named among us. We all should be equal before the law in respect to these things.

Important to Nonconformity as was the passing of the Toleration Act, it was scarcely more so than the rejection of the Comprehension Bill, which was introduced to Parliament at the same time. Many Nonconformists, notably the Presbyterians, were quite willing, and even anxious, to be included in the National Church, if only the terms imposed were such as they could conscientiously comply with. No such terms would be assented to by the Church party; and, to the disappointment of King William, the comprehension scheme failed. We may be thankful that it did. Had it succeeded, Nonconformity would have been

greatly weakened ; and we believe its maturity was needed then, and is needed still, for the purity of religion, and the highest interests of the nation.

It is noteworthy that those who have felt most deeply the need for reformation in the Church have been very loth to separate from her communion. Wycliffe bore with a great deal that troubled him before he would break with Rome. It was under a moral compulsion that he became antagonistic. The men who at the first saw the imperfection of the English Reformation apparently confined their hope of progress to what might be accomplished within the Establishment. The Puritan Separatists, in the early part of Queen Elizabeth's reign, were forced from a Church to which they clung by the hard unyielding action of the Queen and her Archbishop. The Presbyterians at the Hampton Court Conference would have been content with very small mercies, and at the Savoy Conference they were prepared to yield a great deal for the sake of peace. Had the stringency of the Act of Uniformity been somewhat modified the exodus from the Church would have been much smaller than it was. For re-entering the Establishment the Presbyterians at any rate would have been liberal in their concessions.

We cannot wonder that men zealous for the interests of Christ's kingdom should shrink from what has the appearance of schism, and endure much rather than seem to be guilty of it. They are tempted to forget that the sacrifice of truth and conscience is too high a price to pay for outward uniformity. There is underlying an undue reluctance to separate, the mischievous assumption that uniformity of creed and worship is to be maintained at all costs. This

assumption we repudiate, as we do that other assumption, already alluded to, that there must be an infallible human interpreter on earth of God's revelation in the Bible.

Spiritual union is far grander than outward uniformity. It is independent of it, and in this present world would seem to be incompatible with it. Uniformity may be only another name for formalism, for apathy, for death. Where there is a vigorous life we expect to see, not sameness, but variety of expression. The closing sentence in the late Cardinal Newman's "Apologia" betrays the vast influence of this mistaken assumption respecting the need for uniformity. "And I earnestly pray for this whole company, with a hope against hope, that all of us, who once were so united, and so happy in our union, may even now be brought at length, by the Power of the Divine Will, into One Fold and under One Shepherd." The Cardinal ought to have remembered the distinction in our Lord's words, which English readers may thank the Revisers for making plain to them. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock, One Shepherd." There is one flock. There may be many folds. One spiritual fellowship with Christ is compatible with many enclosures, many visible Churches.

Our principles as Nonconformists are incompatible, it is true, with outward uniformity in the present order of things, but they are not incompatible with spiritual union. Indeed, we believe that just as we are severally true to conscience, and resolved to follow the light given us, we are doing our part towards hastening the accomplishment of a real and noble union in contrast to that which is super-

ficial and worthless. Genuine union can only be the result of spiritual growth. Our principles in respect to the constitution of the Church are favourable to that growth, whereas state-churchism disregards it. Our gathered Churches, with all their imperfections, have professedly a converted membership, and are based on submission to the rule of Christ by His Spirit. A State Church is necessarily so constituted as to preclude the operation of these spiritual principles. Perhaps nothing more strikingly illustrates this than the position which the sovereign of the realm holds to the Church, irrespective of spiritual faith or moral character. It is sufficient to name Henry VIII. and Charles II. to explain what I mean. The former was the first to assume the title of "supreme head of the Church of England." Under the supremacy of the latter the present settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity took place. We say that the ruler's relation to a Christian Church and his position in it should be determined by what he is as a man, and not by his official status in the world. High character in the ruler of a great nation tells immensely for national righteousness, and his membership in a Christian Church may be of unspeakable value. But to make the ruler by reason of his office head of the Church may be to bring reproach and disaster upon it, and leave little room for the rule of Christ by His Spirit.

Let us now reflect that a gathered Church in the most obscure meeting-house in the land would have refused membership to Charles II., and would have been justified in doing so. In proof of this take one glance at the picture which Macaulay gives of His Majesty's last days. "His palace had seldom presented a gayer or more scandalous

appearance than on the evening of Sunday the first of February 1685. Some grave persons who had gone thither, after the fashion of that age, to pay their duty to their Sovereign, and who had expected that, on such a day, his court would wear a decent aspect, were struck with astonishment and horror. The great gallery of Whitehall, an admirable relic of the magnificence of the Tudors, was crowded with revelers and gamblers. The King sate there chatting and toying with three women, whose charms were the boast, and whose vices were the disgrace, of three nations. . . . A party of twenty courtiers was seated at cards round a large table, on which gold was heaped in mountains. Even then the King had complained that he did not feel quite well." That was on Sunday evening. Thursday night was the King's last night on earth. That evening English prelates, who had already exhorted His Majesty to prepare for his end, used a plainness of speech which did them honour. The Archbishop of Canterbury said, "It is time to speak out; for, sir, you are about to appear before a Judge who is no respecter of persons." The Bishop of Bath and Wells, whose morning and evening hymns are familiar to us all, spoke like an ancient prophet of Israel. The King heeded them not, and presently a Romish priest was smuggled up the back stairs to absolve the poor dying profligate from his sins. Yet that man, according to the Prayer-Book, was his "most religious Majesty, the Defender of the Faith, and supreme governor of the Church."

There had been a very different death-bed in old Whitehall some twenty-six years before. The great Protector had come to the end of his journey. Carlyle tells us how, "In the tumult of the winds the dying Oliver was heard

uttering this prayer: 'Lord, though I am a miserable and wretched creature, I am in covenant with Thee through grace. And I may, I will, come to Thee for Thy people. Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do them some good, and Thee service; and many of them have set too high a value upon me, though others wish and would be glad of my death. Lord, however Thou do dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them. Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love; and go on to deliver them, and with the work of reformation; and make the name of Christ glorious in the world. Teach those who look too much on Thy instruments, to depend more upon Thyself. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm, for they are Thy people too. And pardon the folly of this short prayer: even for Jesus Christ's sake. And give us a good night, if it be Thy pleasure. Amen.'" This is but one of many utterances indicating the humble Christian man Oliver Cromwell was. That is the kind of Defender of the Faith men want to see. English history hardly contains a more impressive contrast than Carlyle's description of Cromwell's deathbed and Macaulay's picture of the last days of Charles II. I think, too, it serves to mark sharply the distinction between the right and the wrong connection of the earthly ruler with the Christian Church.

The adoption of the principle of toleration, whatever may be said of its insufficiency, marked an advanced position in the great fight for liberty of conscience. The Dissenters, or as I shall still for the most part prefer to call them, the Nonconformists, were not slow to avail themselves of the provisions of the Act passed for their

benefit. When, however, in the second year of the next century, King William III. was succeeded by Queen Anne, it soon became evident that the days of intolerance and persecution were not ended. Nonconformity was yet to feel the grip of the persecutor at its throat, and come to what appeared to be the verge of extinction. The Queen lost no time in making it plain that all her favour would be reserved for the Established Church, and at once the High Church party commenced an attack on the Nonconformity it desired to crush. Certain of the tolerated Dissenters were wont to qualify for civil offices by occasional conformity. They did not go unreproved. The one to rebuke their weak and time-serving policy was Daniel De Foe, the most outspoken Nonconformist of his day. He was a man who deserved better treatment from his brethren than he received, not to speak of the cruel measure dealt to him by his opponents. De Foe urged that whether Nonconformity was right or wrong, occasional conformity was inconsistent with it. Nonconformists who so compromised themselves could not refute the charge of being schismatics. These weaker brethren were assailed, however, from an entirely different quarter. A Bill to make short work of this occasional conformity was passed by the House of Commons, but it was rejected by the House of Lords. Three years in succession the Commons passed a Bill of that kind, but the Lords prevented it from becoming law. There was then a respite of seven years; but in 1711 the Nonconformists were sacrificed to party political exigences, and the Occasional Conformity Bill became law. Every person holding any civil or military office must conform to the Established Church, and if found in a

conventicle afterwards he was to be fined forty pounds, and be disqualified for office in the future. This drastic measure put many Nonconformists to a test they were not able to bear, but it did not answer the end its authors had in view. So in 1714 the Schism Bill was concocted. By this scandalous measure no one could be a tutor or schoolmaster unless he was a member of the Established Church. He must be licensed by the Bishop of the diocese, and only on production of a certificate to show he had been a communicant for a year. The penalty for teaching without a licence was imprisonment without bail. The Bill was pressed through the Commons in hot haste, all its stages being passed in one day. In the Upper House it narrowly escaped rejection, being carried by a majority of only two. The Queen signed it with alacrity. The Schism Bill was a decree of intellectual starvation and inactivity for conscientious Nonconformists. All Nonconformist colleges and schools were doomed to extinction. There were to be no more Nonconformist students for the ministry. The children of Nonconformists were not to be trained in the principles of their fathers. The efforts of Nonconformists to instruct the poor in different parts of the country were to be summarily stopped. The Church thus made a desperate attempt to get the education of the people by main force entirely in its own hands. The infamous Schism Bill received the royal signature on the twenty-fifth of June, and on Sunday the first of August it was to come into operation. Mr. Skeats relates an incident of that Sunday morning which I will quote. "Thomas Bradbury, the Congregational minister of Fetter Lane, was walking through Smithfield, when he met Bishop Burnet.

Burnet called to him from his carriage, and inquired why he seemed so troubled? 'I am thinking,' replied Bradbury, 'whether I shall have the constancy and resolution of that noble company of martyrs whose ashes are deposited in this place; for I most assuredly expect to see similar times of violence and persecution, and that I shall be called to suffer in a like cause.' The Bishop, endeavouring to calm him, informed Bradbury that the Queen had been given over by her physicians, and was expected every hour to die, and that he himself was then on his way to court. He offered to send a messenger to Bradbury to give him the earliest intelligence of the Queen's death, and arranged that, if the messenger should find Bradbury in his pulpit, he should go into the gallery of Fetter Lane Chapel, and drop a handkerchief. The Queen died on the same morning; and while Bradbury was preaching the messenger arrived, and dropped his handkerchief from the front gallery. The preacher made no reference to the event in his sermon; but in the succeeding prayer he offered public thanks for the delivery of the nation, and implored the Divine blessing on King George I. and the House of Hanover."

The Schism Act was never enforced, and was very soon formally repealed, along with portions of the Occasional Conformity Act. This partial reversal of persecuting laws in 1718 was to suffice for a century. The Conventicle and Five Mile Acts were not repealed till 1812. The Test and Corporation Acts disgraced the Statute-Book till 1828. Under the Toleration Act, however, Nonconformity could live. That life, one is sorry to say, was not for some years so vigorous as it might have been hoped it would be. It appears to have shared in a general depression and degene-

racy of all that is best in a nation's life. The time from the death of Queen Anne to the middle of the century, though a period of material prosperity, had little else to recommend it. Infidelity was widespread and scornful. Christianity was treated as a worn-out fable, and its restraints were wantonly disregarded. Vice was rampant and unblushing. Amidst abounding wickedness the Churches were greatly contaminated. The lines of separation from the world were few and faint. Zeal waned, lukewarmness was all prevalent. Godly men in the Established Church and in Nonconformist Communities alike bemoaned the condition of religion, and uttered solemn reproofs and admonitions. It was in those days Bishop Butler, in publishing his "Analogy," wrote: "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were, by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world." Then, too, Dr. Isaac Watts, in his "Humble Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion among Christians," addressed Nonconformists thus: "To sum up all in general, your fathers had an honourable character, and a very great reputation, even among the looser parts of the nation, for strict virtue, for exemplary and sincere godliness, beyond the common multitude of those who called themselves the Established Church, for if any person appeared to be strictly religious, and fearful of indulging any sin—if he was scrupulous of any doubtful

practice, or attempted to give an admonition to the sons of vice, he was presently called a Puritan, or a Fanatic, or Presbyterian, by way of reproach. This honour was a frequent tribute paid by the ungodly world to the superior virtue and merit of your ancestors and their profession of Nonconformity. What is become of this your reputation? Have you lost your good name? Have you sold your glory for the indulgence of the follies and vanities of life? Have you fallen into such a neglect of strict religion as leaves no other distinction between you and your neighbours besides your worship once a week in a different place and manner? It is time, my friends, when religion is sunk into such a universal decay in the nation, to inquire whether we have not suffered it to decay amongst us all, and whether we are not sharers in the common degeneracy. If the bulk of the nation be far gone in the neglect of virtue and godliness, let us not dare to follow the multitude and make our profession of separation an empty name, and our pretence to purer worship a mere badge of hypocrisy."

The days were evil. England needed rousing preachers, and God was preparing them. At Oxford was a little band of intensely earnest young men, who, for their austere habits, were dubbed "Methodists." The world knows the names of three of them, and will never forget them—John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield. Whitefield, with his impassioned and soul-stirring eloquence, may be called the great Methodist pioneer. Close on his heels followed John Wesley, with his more varied gifts. Charles Wesley's best service, as it seems to us, was rendered in the burst of sacred song with which he delighted the Church. Whitefield and the Wesleys

differed in theology, but they preached the same Gospel of redeeming love. Alike they sought to effect a reformation of "men's tempers and lives," and they incurred the usual penalty. "For this it was," as John Wesley says, "that they carried their lives in their hands; and that both the great vulgar and the small looked upon them as mad dogs, and treated them as such."

The press poured upon the Methodist preachers scurrilous abuse, and the mob treated them with brutal violence, the latter not unfrequently countenanced and even instigated by local magnates. Here is a sample from the Methodist experience of mobs in 1742. "At Long Lane, in London, they threw large stones upon the house in which Wesley was preaching, which, with the tiles, fell among the people, endangering their lives. At Chelsea, burning substances were cast into the room till it was filled with smoke. At Pensford, near Bristol, a hired rabble brought a bull, which they had been baiting, and tried to drive it among the people; and then forcing their way to the little table on which Wesley stood, they 'tore it bit from bit' with fiendish violence. A similar outrage was perpetrated at Whitechapel. The mob did their utmost to force a herd of cattle among the congregation, and then threw showers of stones, one of which struck Wesley between the eyes, but, wiping away the blood, he continued the service as if nothing had happened." "In Exeter," says the *London Evening Post*, for May 16, 1745, "the Methodists had a meeting-house behind the Guildhall, and on May 6th the mob gathered at the door and pelted those who entered with potatoes, mud, and dung. On coming out the congregation were all beaten, without exception; many were trampled

under foot, many fled without their hats and wigs, and some without coats, or with half of them torn to tatters. Some of the women were lamed, and others stripped naked and rolled most indecently in the kennel, their faces being besmeared with lampblack, flour, and dirt. This disgraceful mob consisted of some thousands of cowardly blackguards, and the disturbance was continued till midnight." An incident in Cornwall in 1745 reveals the secret of not a little of the hostility. "Edward Greenfield, of St. Just, a tanner, with a wife and seven children, was arrested under a warrant signed by Dr. Borlase. Wesley asked what objection there was to this peaceable and inoffensive man. The answer was, 'The man is well enough in other things, but the gentlemen cannot bear his impudence. Why, sir, he says he knows his sins are forgiven.'"

Whitefield and the Wesleys were Churchmen, but notwithstanding all they might say and feel, or desire, theirs was a work of Nonconformity from first to last. Whitefield was friendly with Dissenters. The Wesleys would have nothing to do with them. The churches were very soon closed against them all. They had therefore to betake themselves to the fields and public places. Whitefield began this free method, and Wesley quickly followed the example, sorely against his strait-laced notions of propriety. He confessed that he had been so punctilious on points of order that he "should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church." He was to overcome other prejudices also, and to be in the eyes of many yet more vile. He, the strict Churchman, sent out an army of unordained laymen to preach, and was presently unable to forbid women preachers from delivering

their message. Not separating from the Church, he yet formed classes and societies of converts, which, though they might co-exist with Churchmanship for a while, were so much after the type of the gathered churches of Nonconformity that entire separation was only a question of time. In fact, John Wesley was, through his long career, perpetually jeopardising the Churchmanship he could never forget. He and his brother Charles strove hard to realise the impossible combination of loyalty to a State Church and free evangelistic fervour. John Wesley declared he would not leave the Church unless he were thrust out. Separation to his mind was lawful, but not expedient. To Charles Wesley it was neither lawful nor expedient. Between brother Charles and his stiff Churchmanship, and the impassioned force of Methodism, which ill brooked such restraint, John Wesley's position was often an extremely difficult one. Rather than relinquish the work of God, Wesley would not hesitate to separate from the Established Church, and there were occasions when both he and Whitefield had to choose separation. The Conventicle and Five Mile Acts were still law, and the exemption from their persecuting clauses which the Toleration Act gave was only for Dissenters. Whitefield therefore was compelled to license his tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road as a Dissenting meeting-house, and Wesley had to do likewise with his chapels or take the consequence. However, the great problem of separation has been solved long ago, and for a hundred and fifty years Methodism, in its original, and various later forms, has been bringing forth rich fruit in this country and throughout the world.

Notwithstanding the Methodist revival ignorance and de-

pravity were fearfully prevalent throughout England during the latter part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. On this I may not stay to enlarge, but it is pleasant to note the rise of various great movements of Christian philanthropy during that period. Nonconformists had their full share in originating those movements, and in all of them were amongst their most ardent supporters.

At the mention of philanthropy the name of John Howard instantly occurs to the memory. He was made Sheriff of Bedford in 1773. There and then his public career of self-sacrificing service began, not to cease until, on the 20th of January 1790, he died of camp fever at Kherson. Howard was a Congregationalist, and too consistent to be an Occasional Conformist. The risk he ran was consequently great. In 1789 reference was made to it in the House of Commons by Mr. Beaufoy, in moving the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. After quoting Mr. Burke's eulogistic description of the philanthropic labours of Howard, Mr. Beaufoy added, "He, even he, is denied, in England, the common rights of a subject: he is incapable of legal admission into any office; and the consequence is that his zeal for his country, having led him a few years since to brave the penalties of the law, and to serve her in a troublesome and expensive civil employment, without the sacramental qualification which his religious persuasion would not permit him to take, the penalties of the Test Act are still hanging over him, and I fear that even now, on his return to his native country, amid the plaudits of an admiring world, it is in the power of any desperate informer, who is willing to take that road to wealth and damnation which the

Legislature has pointed out and recommended to his choice, I fear it is in the power of every such informer to prosecute him to conviction, and to bring upon him those dreadful penalties which contribute to the punishment of an outlaw."

In those days the beneficent work of Sunday Schools and Ragged Schools was begun. The terrible slave-trade was attacked by resolute men and destroyed. It had been denounced by men of very different religious opinions long before. "The first Christian body, as such, who delivered a protest against it was the Quakers." Then, too, the Churches were stirred to consider the claims of people sitting in darkness and "the shadow of death," to receive from them the light of life. William Carey, in the workings of whose mind, we are told, the earliest of these modern missionary societies had its origin, went to India in 1793. Great were the obstacles to be surmounted, and plentiful was the ridicule bestowed. Sydney Smith, in his virulent attacks on "Methodists and missionaries," boasted that he was "routing out a nest of consecrated cobblers," and said that the missionaries ought no more to complain of intolerance than a weasel "when he is throttled for sucking eggs." "Consecrated cobbler" was the Church dignitary's polite way of describing a man concerning whom a few years afterwards Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General of India, said he esteemed his testimony to him "a greater honour than the applause of courts and Parliaments." The patience, industry, self-denial, and humility of Carey gave efficiency and charm to his marvellous intellectual endowments, and combined to make him a worthy pioneer of the noble band of Christian labourers whom churches of different denominations soon sent into the vast regions of heathendom.

The Religious Tract Society was founded in 1799. The British and Foreign Bible Society followed in 1804. The suggestion of the latter appears to have been due to Joseph Hughes, a Baptist minister, who became one of its first secretaries. The committee consisted half of Churchmen and half of Dissenters. The bulk of the bishops, with a strong following of the clergy, were fiercely antagonistic to the new Society. Terrible things were to happen if the people generally should possess the Bible without the Book of Common Prayer. The Evangelicals, however, who at that time embodied the best life and energy of the Church, were hearty supporters of the Society, and the result of the controversy was that Churchmen as well as Nonconformists gave their adherence to it. It is pleasant to remember that the Duke of Kent, the father of Queen Victoria, took a warm interest in the project at the time, when it was the fashion amongst Church dignitaries to deride it.

One might, did time permit, refer to educational efforts, in which Nonconformists led the way; or to the emancipation of negro slaves, in which they bore the brunt of the conflict; but enough has been said to indicate that the maturity of Nonconformity has been no unfruitful season.

Nonconformity, it should be superfluous to say, cannot live upon its past. The future ought to be even more productive of good, and it may be our privilege to make it so.

“To have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery. Take the instant way;
For honour travels in a strait so narrow,
Where one but goes abreast: keep then the path;

For emulation has a thousand sons,
That one by one pursue : if you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,
Like to an enter'd tide, they all rush by,
And leave you hindmost.—
Or like a gallant horse fallen in first rank,
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,
O'errun and trampled on : then what they do in present,
Though less than yours in past, must o'ertop yours :
For time is like a fashionable host,
That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand ;
And with his arms outstretched, as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer : welcome ever smiles,
And farewell goes out sighing."

Before closing, there is one important subject to which brief allusion must be made, namely, Christian Willinghood, or what is often called the Voluntary principle. There is nothing of the nature of a tax or a rate countenanced in connection with the Church of Christ in the New Testament. There are no tithes in the Christian system. Christ claims all that a man has, or He claims nothing. The redeemed man is not his own, but his Lord's. He is to provide "for his own, and specially his own household," for he will have "denied the faith" and shamed his Master if he does not. His gifts are to be according to his ability and the outpouring of love. "God loveth a cheerful giver," and it is the Lord's own statement that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

It is strange to what a great extent this principle of Christian willinghood has been disregarded, or lost sight of by the Church, and yet now and again there have been remarkable movements in it involving a recurrence to that principle. Monasticism, notwithstanding its pernicious elements, was in the first instance an effort to restore a simpler

style of Christian living, in which Voluntaryism was an essential feature. As monasteries multiplied, they became enormously wealthy and fearfully corrupt. They had no longer any protest to make against worldly grandeur in the Church. Then the orders of friars sprang up, and bore their testimony against the prevailing worldliness, and became in their turn apostles of Voluntaryism. They too gathered riches, and lost their spiritual force. Wycliffe's Poor Priests followed somewhat on the lines on which the friars had begun. They were not, however, formed into any distinct order, and, consequently, for them there was no process of enrichment and decay. They did their work, and passed off the scene. Wycliffe himself is an early example of a Churchman who protested against ecclesiastical endowments. He was charged with teaching that tithes were "to be considered as pure alms, and ought not to be extorted by censures." His ideal of greatness in the Church included poverty like Christ's.

It is significant that even so late as the fifteenth century there were friars who lifted up their voices on behalf of Voluntaryism. Dr. Vaughan relates that, "in 1425, one William Russell, at the head of a Franciscan convent in London, denied the Divine right of tithes, and insisted that they ought not to be paid to the parochial clergy. They might rest on human law, or on long custom, but, according to the Scriptures, the contributions of the laity should be applied to pious or charitable uses, according to the will of the donors. Great excitement was produced by this teaching. Forty years later a Carmelite friar, named Parker, preached in St. Paul's, that the only revenue of the clergy should consist in the voluntary offerings of the

faithful, that Christ and His Apostles sought no other." Disputings ensued. "Those who had learnt doctrine of this nature from Wycliffe, or from his disciples, looked on, as we may suppose, with no little interest." The disputation issued seriously for John Mylverton, Provincial of the Order of the Carmelites. The Archbishop of Canterbury reported him to the Pope, and a sojourn in a dungeon of St. Angelo was his reward.

Apart, however, from the history of Voluntaryism, it has, as already indicated, New Testament sanction. It is an important feature of Nonconformity, though not its exclusive possession. To others it may perhaps be counted a luxury, but to Nonconformists it is a necessary of life. Gladly recognising the good work which has been accomplished by Voluntaryism in the Established Church, we respectfully submit that when any comparison is instituted between it and the efforts of Nonconformists, it is only fair to remember what Nonconformist Voluntaryism has to do. It has to meet heavy demands in respect to the building of its places of worship and the support of the ministry, from which Churchmen, though the wealthier portion of the community, are for the most part free, before it can begin any generous rivalry with them.

The connection of Church and State in England, to which we cannot assent, implies both State control and State patronage. Enough has been said about the evil of the former. It has been freely acknowledged by many who have been very slow to perceive the evil of the latter. It is so much easier to resent restraint than to renounce privilege. Many gathered Churches have, during past centuries, felt it to be their honour and delight to be

self-supporting. It has been their choice. Others have been forced into self-reliance, and have since learned its advantages. To-day Nonconformists have no desire to relinquish their position of freedom and self-respect.

A few words on this matter, and I have done. We hold that the civil government ought not to interfere with the faith or worship of its subjects, provided they do no injury to their neighbours thereby. We say that favour should not be shown to any because they belong to this religious community or to that. We deem it unjust that national property should be used for the support of any religious belief whatever, and are persuaded that the perpetration of injustice is an injury to religion itself. We believe that a Church will be purer if it depend entirely on the resources of Christian willinghood, and that its moral tone is necessarily lowered if anything unjust is allowed a place in its constitution. The more we loved the Church, the more should we deprecate for it a State alliance.

Whilst, therefore, we object to the position of privilege which the Episcopal Church occupies, as unfair to us as citizens and injurious to our work as Christians, we would not on any account change places with it if we could. There is an old ecclesiastical tradition, Milton says, that when Constantine took Christianity under the imperial patronage, a great voice was heard from heaven, "This day is poison poured into the Church." The body of the tradition may be a myth, the soul of it is a truth. We are not jealous of a Church, but we would see all Churches constitutionally so strong as to throw off the poison with which the adversary has infected them. We would welcome the abolition of Nonconformity by the emancipation of the

Episcopal Church from everything that depresses its spiritual vitality and retards its true Christian progress. Meanwhile our weightier responsibility is to give such practical expression to our principles as shall be noble enough to command the respect of our opponents, and worthy of the saints who have won our freedom by their pains, their privations, and their blood.

IV

THE CONTROVERSY OF ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY WITH SACERDOTALISM TO-DAY

Oxford and Cambridge movements—The trumpet-call of Sacerdotalism—The trumpeter afraid to die!—Table or altar—Uncertain Orders—Faith or credulity—The true priesthood—New Testament bishops—Episcopal admissions—Controversy unavoidable—Isolation of Anglican priests—Rapid growth of Sacerdotalism—Paganising Christianity—The confessional—Attempt to make auricular confession obligatory—Preparing for Rome—Preacher *versus* priest—Legacy of superstition—"Nothing but the truth"—"Ironsides" wanted—Right principles and worthy methods—"Arise"—Truth's "lovely form"—Summary of Nonconformist position—Appeal to be true and brave.

A CENTURY separates the birthdays of two modern Oxford movements of great interest and importance to the religious life of England. Each had in a certain sense a High Church origin, but the subsequent development of the two movements has been in quite opposite directions. From a Nonconformist point of view, and, as we believe, the point of view of primitive Christianity, one has a record of increasing light and expanding Christian liberty, whilst the other marks accumulating superstitions and spiritual enslavement. They are both great forces to be reckoned with, and their names are Methodism and Anglicanism.

The late Cardinal Newman dated the religious movement

with which he was connected from Sunday, 14th July 1833, when "Mr. Keble preached the Assize Sermon in the University pulpit. It was published under the title of 'National Apostasy.'" In the same year the first of the celebrated Tracts for the Times was published, and Anglicanism, sometimes called Tractarianism, Puseyism, and other names, was born.

On the 1st of January 1733, John Wesley "preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the University," a sermon on "The Circumcision of the Heart." "This sermon," he said, thirty-two years afterwards, "contained all that I now teach concerning salvation from sin, and loving God with an undivided heart."

It is interesting to notice that exactly midway between those two dates, namely, in 1783, Charles Simeon became rector of Trinity Church, Cambridge, to minister there for fifty-three years, and to make Cambridge the centre of an Evangelical revival in the Church of England of great spiritual power. Such revivals within a State Church, however, must, we think, either have a merely transient existence, or bursting the restraints inevitable to an Establishment, develop into healthy Free Church life. A comparison between the work of Simeon and Wesley and their respective coadjutors would seem to justify this contention. Without underrating the power of the Evangelical party in the Church of England, it seems to an outsider as if, in the ranks of the clergy at least, High Churchism had things pretty much its own way.

The younger of the two Oxford movements is now fully sixty years old, and with it Nonconformity has a controversy of no mean proportions, and of vital importance.

The older movement now supplies no inconsiderable contingent of the Free Church army in the critical conflict.

The controversy of Nonconformity with Sacerdotalism, of which I have now to speak, is not a controversy with Romanism, but with Anglicanism. Since the Reformation, adherents of the Church of Rome have in this country been as much Dissenters as we are. The Sacerdotalism in the National Church is of national concern. Probably undisguised Romanism would have little power of itself to influence our people, but the ceaseless Romanising of a large proportion of the clergy of the Establishment is a much more dangerous thing.

Between the Sacerdotalism of the Church of England and the principles we hold as Nonconformists there is no accord; and so radical are the differences that, as we shall presently see, conflict is unavoidable. We are to remember that this hostile power confronts us under the prestige of the nation's name.

In the Anglo-Catholic movement of sixty years ago, the keynote struck was an appeal to the clergy to assume with boldness the position to which, as the heirs of the Apostles, they were entitled. It was seen that disestablishment might come. "The Government and the Country" might "so far forget their God as to cast off the Church, to deprive it of its temporal honours and substance." And then, asks the writer of Tract Number One, "*on what* will you rest the claim to respect and attention which you make upon your flocks? Hitherto you have been upheld by your birth, your education, your wealth, your connections; should these secular advantages cease, on what must *Christ's* ministers depend? Is not this a serious practical ques-

tion?" "I fear," says he, "we have neglected the real ground on which our authority is built—OUR APOSTOLICAL DESCENT." After describing the ordination of the priest, the writer adds, "Thus we have confessed before God our belief that, through the Bishop who ordained us, we received the HOLY GHOST, the power to bind and to loose, to administer the sacraments, and to preach. Now, *how* is he able to give these great gifts? *Whence* is his right? . . . Has he any right, except as having received the power from those who consecrated him to be a Bishop? He could not give what he had never received.—It is plain, then, that he but *transmits*, and that the Christian ministry is a *succession*. And if we trace back the power of ordination from hand to hand, of course we shall come to the Apostles at last. We know we do, as a plain historical fact, and therefore all we who have been ordained clergy, in the very form of our ordination acknowledged the doctrine of the APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION."

Thus the writer of the Tract based everything pertaining to priestly dignity and power on the Apostolical Succession, which he regarded as "a plain historical fact," of which he felt quite sure. Yet, strange to say, eleven or twelve years afterwards that very priest who had received, he said, the Holy Ghost, through the bishop who ordained him, revealed this painful bewilderment of soul. "The simple question is, Can *I* (it is personal, not whether another, but can *I*) be saved in the English Church? Am *I* in safety, were I to die to-night? Is it a mortal sin in *me* not joining another communion?" The conclusion was that the English Church was schismatical, and that to be saved he must join the Church of Rome. It is well to observe thus early

that the man who was foremost in indicating what he deemed the solid foundation of the Anglican priesthood presently treated it as shifting sand, and fled.

Newman left the Church of England. Others, who shared his views concerning Apostolical Succession, remained. They did, as he urged them, "make much of it." They and their followers have been making much of it ever since. By it the priesthood is constituted. Upon it the whole doctrine concerning the priesthood depends. Each man of the priesthood has heard the apostolically descended, albeit politically appointed, bishop say, according to law, "Receive the HOLY GHOST, for the office and work of a Priest, in the Church of GOD, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of GOD, and of His Holy Sacraments." From that moment he has regarded himself as possessed of a power to absolve from sins, of which he was destitute before, and, in the administration of the sacrament, to be an instrument by which a stupendous miracle is wrought. He belongs to "the only Church in this realm which has a right to be quite sure that she has the Lord's Body to give to His people." And he believes that he does give that body when he administers the bread and wine he has consecrated.

The table which the reformers succeeded in substituting for the altar, and which was placed lengthwise in the church, near the people, as suitable to a communion, has long ago got back to the end of the chancel, and been placed altarwise there. By the sacerdotal clergy it is of

course treated in every way as an altar, and upon the altar there is a sacrifice. The teaching of Anglo-Catholics in respect to the doctrine of the Real Presence is so constant and so marked that it is unnecessary to quote its familiar expressions. These stanzas from one of their hymns shall suffice :—

“Wondrous gift !—the Word who moulded
All things by His might divine,
Bread into His Body changes,
Into His own Blood the wine ;—
What though sense no change perceives,
Faith admires, adores, believes !

“He who once to die a Victim
On the Cross did not refuse,
Day by day, upon our Altars,
That same Sacrifice renews,
Through His holy Priesthood’s hands,
Faithful to His last commands !

“While the people, all uniting
In the Sacrifice sublime,
Offer Christ to His high Father,
Offer up themselves with Him ;
Then together with the Priest
On the living Victim feast ! Amen.”

One has scarcely patience to examine carefully such teaching as this, for surely it is both blasphemous and grotesque. We are required to believe that the bread and wine, in which we cannot by observation or any process possible to us detect the slightest alteration, have, in consequence of the priest’s consecration, become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Anglican divines tell us that this stupendous change has been effected, and we are to take their word for it. But they admit that the change

in the elements is contingent on the consecrating priest being truly in the apostolic succession. If he has not been duly ordained by a bishop, the bread which he professes to consecrate remains only bread, and the wine only wine, and there is no giving of the Lord's body to his people. If the bishop who ordained the priest did not himself duly receive the supernatural gift "from those who consecrated him to be a bishop," the so-called priest is only a plain person, and they to whom he administers the sacrament do not receive the Lord's body. The bishop "could not give what he had never received." If anywhere along the episcopal line through which the priest traces his apostolic descent there should have been a single invalid episcopal consecration, the virtue is lost, and plain bread and wine are all the communicants get from him. The succession has been through many dark and troubled centuries wherein grievous corruptions have abounded ; but it appears that in the transmission of this supernatural power character does not count. Listen to Tracts for the Times. "And be it remembered that the apostolic powers, if not transmitted through these, in some instances corrupt channels, had not been transmitted to our times at all. Unless then we acknowledge the reality of such transmission, we must admit that the Church which Christ founded is no longer to be found upon the earth, and that the promise of His protection, so far from being available to the end of the world, is forgotten and out of date already. The unworthiness of man, then, cannot prevent the goodness of God from flowing in those channels in which He has destined it to flow ; and the Christian congregations of the present day, who sit at the feet of ministers duly ordained,

have the same reason for reverencing in them the successors of the Apostles as the primitive churches of Ephesus and of Crete had for honouring in Timothy and in Titus the apostolical authority of him who had appointed them."

But while episcopal corruption does not affect the transmission of the apostolic virtue, let it be repeated that the transmission would be certainly stopped by an invalid ordination anywhere in the long succession-line—as certainly as the course of the electric current would be diverted if you cut the conveying wire. An eminent man, fifty years ago, in ardent defence of the Church, calculated that the chances were eight thousand to one that the transmission was all right. But chances at the best are poor things to rely upon when such tremendous issues are at stake.

We are asked to believe that the touch of a bishop's finger in the ordination rite is of more value for securing the flow of Divine grace than any evident token of spiritual life and power without it. Has God willed it so? Has He *destined* His *goodness* to *flow in channels* such as these? Is the presence of Christ with His Church contingent on any such outward and visible succession of ordained priests as this? With the New Testament in our hands, we hasten to utter an emphatic "No," and to protest that this Apostolical succession theory is a deadly heresy with which Nonconformists are not free to make terms or to trifle.

It is reasonable to believe in miracles on sufficient evidence, but it is gross credulity to acknowledge miraculous powers which give no sign of their existence, and which no mortal can be sure are possessed at all. We make our

simple and sufficient appeal to the New Testament, where in no such affront on common sense finds a place.

There is no priestly caste in the Christian system. The work of the "Great High Priest" renders it unnecessary. The sacrifice which He offered "He did once for all, when He offered up Himself." His entrance "into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption," was also "once for all." Believers are said to "have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is also written, "He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sin for ever, sat down on the right hand of God ; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." There needs no further offering for sin, and there can be no re-presentation of that which has been so efficaciously made. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more ; death no more hath dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died unto sin once : but the life that He liveth, he liveth unto God." When Paul had written that, he added, "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." Between the living Christ and the Christians who are to reckon themselves "alive unto God" in Him, there can be no priestly intervention. Nowhere in the New Testament is there a hint of any. On the contrary, the Apostle Peter calls believers in general "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." The Apostle John also describes the redeemed brotherhood as made priests unto God. The functions of the Christian priesthood are such as essentially belong to

the manifestation of spiritual life. As all converts to the Christian faith are called to be saints, so all are made priests unto God. Whatever official positions there may be in the Church, priesthood is not one of them.

That there is no order of priests provided for in the constitution of the Christian Church may be easily accounted for by the fact, already indicated, that there is really nothing for such an order to do. At the Lord's supper we are not called to render homage before an altar, but to sit at a table. We have no awful and mysterious sacrifice there, but simple memorials of the love that redeems us, and the life which sustains and makes us one. "I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from Me ye can do nothing." Acceptance of that teaching is the annihilation of Sacerdotalism.

Since priests are not wanted in the Church, the makers of them would be superfluous, and accordingly we do not find in the New Testament such bishops as Sacerdotalists require in their system. Bishops or overseers, presbyters or elders, belong to the same order in the Church. They are different names for the same class of officers. A church in the early days might have one or more of these officers; and if it had several, it is quite likely one might become the presiding elder. The bishop in the primitive church was simply what we Nonconformists call the pastor of the church. Diocesan episcopacy had no place in it.

In respect to the absence of Sacerdotalism in the Christian system, it is a pleasure to know that distinguished bishops of the Church of England have spoken as plainly as Nonconformists could wish. Archbishop

Whately said years ago : "The introduction of Sacerdotal priests, altars, sacrifices, and temples, which is so utterly repugnant to the whole character of the Gospel, may be traced both to Judaism and paganism." He also said, "Whenever the title of priest is applied to any Christians, it is applied to all Christians." The present Bishop of Worcester, Dr. Perowne, said not long since, when Dean of Peterborough, "But write it down in your memories, for it will save you from a world of confusion of thought, as well as from all the mischief of erroneous teaching—that never once in the New Testament is the Christian minister called a 'priest.'" The late Bishop of Durham, Dr. Lightfoot, in his dissertation on "The Christian Ministry," has written most clearly and forcibly concerning the absence of Sacerdotalism in Christianity. In referring to the terms 'presbyter' and 'bishop,' he says, "In the apostolic writings the two are only different designations of one and the same office." He also says, "The opinion . . . that the same officers in the Church who were first called Apostles came afterwards to be designated bishops, is baseless." "The episcopate was formed, not out of the apostolic order by localisation, but out of the presbyterial, by elevation ; and the title which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them."

Whilst appreciating such Episcopal deliverances as these against Sacerdotalism, they do not alter the fact that the Church of England is largely dominated by men who firmly believe in it, and sedulously propagate it. Moreover, if Sacerdotalism were much less influential than it is in the Establishment, there is enough of the priestly element at least in the Rubrics and the Catechism to warn Noncon-

formists of the pressing need for maintaining their Non-conformity intact.

Conflict has already been spoken of as unavoidable. In a few words it may now be explained why this is so. Amongst what are called Evangelical Nonconformists, obviously there are differences of religious belief, and various methods of Church government. Some of the things wherein we differ are of comparatively slight moment, and others are deemed of considerable importance; but there is nothing in our divisions to prevent us from acknowledging our several Churches as Churches of Christ, or from co-operating heartily in preaching the Gospel to men everywhere. We might as heartily co-operate with the Evangelical party in the Church of England, if it were not for the state alliance, which fetters their action and keeps us at a distance. It is quite a different matter with the Sacerdotal party in the English Church. State alliance or no state alliance, there is in their cherished doctrine of the Apostolical Succession a barrier between us which is impassable until they surrender it. It is not the fault of Nonconformists. We can admire the saintliness of some who are under the illusions of Sacerdotalism, and rejoice in any good work they can accomplish. But Sacerdotalists cannot recognise us. According to their consciences, strangely perverted, as we think, they are bound to treat us as outside the pale of the Christian Church, and refuse to acknowledge the Christian status of our pastors. They are compelled by their sacerdotal theory to regard us as aliens, and to work for our extinction. At the Birmingham Church Congress, in October 1893, the Rev. C. Gore candidly declared that "the maintenance of the Apostolical

Succession precludes the hope (if it otherwise existed) of rapid reunion with the Nonconformist bodies." He added, "We cannot admit Nonconformist ministers as validly ordained ministers of the Word and Sacraments." Mr. Gore's statement was received with applause, and is, indeed, no more than every High Churchman would say. Conflict is therefore forced upon us, unless we consent to extinction. But we believe that the principles we hold are those of primitive Christianity, and therefore worth maintaining. We must needs resist a power that would banish from the land what we regard as the truth of God. And further, if our principles are sound and good, Sacerdotalism is a deadly delusion. Our conscience becomes imperative. We may not refrain from energetic testimony on behalf of truth against error. We must show the light which is to dispel the darkness. The controversy is inevitable. Our concern should be to bear ourselves in it in a manner worthy of our cause.

And here let us look our opponents in the face, and ascertain what their position is in the huge ranks of Sacerdotalism. We, protesting, as we do, that Sacerdotalism is no part of Christianity, may yet with propriety scrutinise the standing of the Anglican Sacerdotalists, who directly confront us, with their supposed comrades. What if these Anglicans themselves should be aliens too?

Now, at the time Mr. Gore was saying at the Church Congress, "We cannot admit Nonconformist ministers as validly ordained ministers of the Word and Sacraments," the Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster was denying the validity of the orders of Mr. Gore and his friends. On 13th September 1893, Cardinal Vaughan wrote thus :

“The sentiments of charity and sincere respect we feel for the many zealous and estimable men who labour in the ministry of the Anglican and Dissenting bodies are happily a matter altogether independent of any recognition of canonical status. Upon the latter subject the mind and attitude of the Catholic Church are abundantly clear. Of the 1200 bishops who form her Episcopate, I do not know of even one who would admit for a moment the validity of Anglican orders. The Holy See has in the plainest manner refused to give any such recognition. No pronouncement by the Church, couched in the formal words of any abstract decision, could be more eloquent and emphatic than that which she utters when she speaks to the world by her deeds, and commands that any convert drawn from the ranks of the Anglican clergy who seeks admission to the Catholic priesthood shall, when admitted, be ordained *unconditionally*, and without reference to any ordinance previously received from the Anglican ministry. Such a course of action would, according to her own teaching, be manifest sacrilege if the Church in any way believed in the validity of Anglican orders; and her deliberate adoption of that course is the clearest possible guarantee that she does not recognise in the Anglican body the possession of Apostolical Succession or a valid priesthood.”

Let us turn from the West to the East, and see if things are any better for the Anglicans in that direction. Ten or eleven years ago there was published, “Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church in the year 1840-41,” by the late Rev. William Palmer, who was one of the men associated with Newman in the Oxford movement. Mr. Palmer went to Russia to ascertain what hope there might be of

reunion with the Eastern Church, and he had numerous interviews with M. Mouravieff, one of the principal officials of the Church. Mr. Palmer says, "On my urging on him a special prayer for the Anglican Church, he said, 'We know you only as heretics. You separated from the Latin Church three hundred years ago, as the Latin had before that fallen away from the Greek. We think even the Latin Church heretical, but you are an apostasy from an apostasy, a progression from bad to worse.'" Again, M. Mouravieff says, "You were a portion of the Pope's Patriarchate, and you rebelled against him." Upon Mr. Palmer objecting, he said, "Did he not send Augustine to convert you? Anyhow, the Pope had acquired, and the Church had confirmed to him, very great power. And did not one of your kings even make England a fief of the Pope?" Once more—"If we had any communication with your Church it must be through the Pope and the Church of Rome, nor can we recognise you otherwise. Reconcile yourself to your own Patriarch first, and then come and talk to us, if you think you have anything to say to us."

These are plain words, and they well picture for us the isolation of the Anglican priests who claim to be invested with supernatural and mysterious powers in respect to the cure of our souls and our eternal destiny. They stand entirely alone. The validity of their orders is neither acknowledged in the West nor in the East. Whilst we protest that their assumptions have no warrant in the Word of God, Sacerdotalists throughout the world agree that there is no warrant of any kind for them. We may appropriately adopt M. Mouravieff's plainness of speech, and

with a slight modification of its terms say, "Reconcile yourselves to your fellow-Sacerdotalists first, and then come and talk to us, if you think you have anything to say to us." Really they have nothing to show in support of their claims, and notwithstanding a bold front we may suspect some of them of a secret misgiving lest their pretensions should be vain; for every now and then their ranks are thinned by the defection of men who, like Newman, suddenly discover that they have been parading invalid orders, and cannot be saved in the English Church.

All this would be simply ludicrous if it were not so sad and the consequences so deplorable. It seems strange that English people should, in the nineteenth century, be deluded by these priestly pretensions, yet it is plain that many blindly submit to them. We cannot too earnestly entreat our young people fairly to look this matter in the face, and resolutely hold aloof from the superstitions which are substituted for the simplicity of the Gospel.

We need to be careful not to underrate the power of the enemy. It is to be feared many Nonconformists do not realise the seriousness of the danger to which the religious life of the nation is exposed by the energetic action of the Anglican priests. The very rapid spread of Sacerdotalism in early times when once it had appeared supplies a significant warning. Dr. Lightfoot says—"Towards the close of the second century we discern the first germs appearing above the surface; yet shortly after the middle of the third the plant has all but attained its full growth." The modern Anglican form of Sacerdotalism has shown itself to be a plant of exceedingly quick growth, although the soil of England might have been supposed to be far from con-

genial to it. The Oxford movement, which Church dignitaries at first tried to frown down and repress, has changed the whole aspect of the Established Church, and bishops do practically nothing to check its advance, and rarely utter a word of expostulation or reproof. Practices abhorrent to Protestantism are introduced as quickly as the people will bear them. The very name of Protestant is warmly repudiated by an increasing number of the clergy. It is not worth while to spend time in attempting to describe the various performances of our Anglican priests—the scenic displays, the perfume of incense, the numerous genuflections, and other postures occasionally grotesque and grovelling, the variegated vestments, more befitting a millinery establishment or a show than a Christian church. Be it remembered, however, that the whole system of ritual is carefully contrived for the purpose of impressing upon the minds of the people that sacerdotal idea which we Nonconformists feel to be so repugnant to Christianity.

Sacerdotalism is no genuine product of Christianity, but something introduced from without. The change to it in the Church, Dr. Lightfoot says, was mainly due to Gentile, that is Pagan influences, but the form adopted was Jewish. Dr. Whately, as already quoted, said it might be “traced both to Judaism and Paganism.” If then I describe Sacerdotalism as Paganism imported into Christianity in a Jewish dress, the language is not too strong; and I feel all the freer to employ it because it is not stronger than even Episcopal statements warrant. The process of paganising Christianity is going on through the length and breadth of England by means of thousands of the clergy of the Established Church and a great army of male and female

coadjutors. They frighten mothers with the terrible idea that their babies will be eternally lost if they are not christened. They put pressure on parents to have their rough boys confirmed, causing them to leave our Sunday-schools for the purpose, although that may involve severance from all further Christian instruction. They endeavour to persuade people that it is a sin to attend Nonconformist places of worship.

Perhaps the most odious and dangerous of these Ritualistic innovations is that of the Confessional, and it may be desirable to speak a little more particularly about that. There is a little book entitled "Before the Altar," which gives information respecting what is taught on this subject. It is admitted that confession is not obligatory in the Established Church, and this is how it is done. "Before the Reformation, confession was obligatory. But now the Church of England prefers to leave it to the discretion of her children to go to God's minister for confession when they feel their need. Yet as before, she gives her Priests, by Christ's command, power to forgive sins." The only text quoted as enjoining confession is the passage in James v. 16, "Confess your sins one to another." This is again and again quoted, and always with a total disregard of its meaning. Listen to the audacious way in which confession is represented as of Divine appointment. "There is another reason why God bids us tell our sins to Him before men. *Our sins are not affairs only between ourselves and God.* Each sin is a wrong to the Body of Christ, the Church of which we are members. So from the first the rule has been, 'Confess your trespasses one to another.' You have wronged the whole body, therefore humble

yourself before the whole body, by acknowledging the wrong. But the Church has, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, deputed the Priests to receive these confessions of sins. And the Priests have the commission of Christ to pronounce forgiveness to penitent souls in His name, and by His power." Again, "Confession of sin to God's minister is a way by which truly penitent souls may make sure of a good repentance, and a special pardon for their sins, with the grace of the Holy Ghost. St. James (v. 16) tells us, 'Confess your faults one to another;' and the Church has arranged for many centuries that this confession shall be made before the Priest, the representative of the congregation, who is able to pronounce pardon or absolution in the Name and Person of Christ. . . . At first, Absolution was for the most part only given after public confession of great sins, and generally by the Bishops. Soon it was found undesirable that the sins should be declared in public, and hence the change to private confession."

In respect to these extracts, first, we may deny the sweeping assertion that "God bids us tell our sins to Him before men;" secondly, we may say that if He had, the Church would have no right to substitute for a public confession a private one; and thirdly, we may assume that when it is said that the Church has deputed the priests to receive confessions, it means that the priests have deputed themselves to do this, for in regard to these things the Church usually stands for the clergy.

Here is another significant sentence. "The *best* way, therefore, in the case of all grave sins, is to open our griefs to God's minister, in order to get the benefit of

absolution. If, however, we are unable to do this, we must tell out all our sins to God at least privately." So then if the priest is not available, Almighty God will serve our purpose! Surely sensible people should see that it is best in every instance to go straight to the "Father, which seeth in secret," without the intervention of a man of like passions with themselves. He who is one with the Father and one with us, says, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." One more reference. Amongst "sins against the Commandments" are mentioned "neglecting to go to Church, and to observe Sundays, Christmas Day, Ash-Wednesday, Good Friday, Ascension Day, Fridays, Fast Days, &c., . . . preparing carelessly for Communion, and not using confession when needful."

In the publication just quoted, confession, though represented as highly important and necessary, is reluctantly admitted to be optional in the Church of England; but the Anglican priests are trying to make it obligatory. Immature servant girls and others have placed in their hands little printed books in which it is assumed that confession to a priest is a necessity of spiritual life. One of these publications, entitled "Absolution and how to Obtain it," has been brought to my notice by a friend, whose young servant the clergyman was endeavouring to compel to confession by means of it. This is what one reads: "When we know our sins, and have true sorrow for them, we of course wish to have them forgiven; and God has mercifully sent His Priests to give us Absolution. Before, however, we can get this, we must show our sorrow is true, by telling God, before His Priest, all the sins we can remember.

We shall no doubt feel this a very disagreeable thing to do, but we must let nothing stop us, as it would be much more dreadful to have all our sins told out at the judgment day before all the world, and then perhaps be sent to Hell." Thus the terrors of the judgment day and hell are used to compel our sons and daughters to make auricular confession to a priest. This is done in the so-called Protestant Church of England. This is done under the sanction of the nation's name. This is done, for instance, in Exeter, whose Bishop is a prominent member of the Evangelical Alliance! The priest to whom confession is made expects to be called "Father," and it will scarcely excite surprise to learn that his children in the faith are taught that to worship at a Dissenting chapel is a breach of the second commandment.

Twenty years ago, the late Lord Shaftesbury told the House of Lords that he knew the spread of the confessional amongst all classes to be very rapid, and he referred to the "indignation and horror" expressed by the Lord Chancellor in respect to "the books relating to the confessional that were issued by well-known publishers and scattered broadcast throughout the country." The plague has been spreading ever since, and nothing is done to stay it.

In the *Nineteenth Century* for December 1893, there is a notable article by Professor St. George Mivart, whose previous articles on "Hell" in that Review have been condemned by the Romish Church. The Professor loyally submits to the decree of his Church, and in explaining his position, takes the opportunity of making some instructive remarks on Anglican Sacerdotalism. After

referring to the discordant notes in the Church Congress at Birmingham, he writes: "But these facts should not blind us to the good work the High Church party in the Establishment is doing. The English people are sadly inaccessible to the Catholic clergy on account of old habits and traditional prejudices, and modern Catholic worship is often strange and repellant to them. But the Ritualistic ministers of the Establishment can easily obtain a hearing and succeed in scattering the good seed of Roman doctrine far and wide. We now frequently meet with devout practices which, fifty years ago, were unheard of, save to be denounced and scouted, outside the small Catholic body. But Ritualists are rapidly making the word 'Protestant' to stink in the nostrils of their congregations, and causing them to regard it as a detestable form of belief. Thus, not only are our ancient churches being renovated and decorated in the Roman spirit, and so prepared for us, but congregations to fill them are also being gathered together." The Professor derides the claims of High Churchmen while he praises their work. He says, "I know nothing which seems at once so pathetic and so absurdly grotesque as for members of the Anglican Church to pretend to be *Catholics*." Yet since they are effective workers for Rome, he refers to them as "devoted and noble-minded men," just as he describes that queen whose memory Englishmen execrate as "good Queen Mary."

It is strange that when the eyes of a Romanist are so wide open to see what Sacerdotalists in the Established Church are doing, the Protestants of the country should be so blind or apathetic in respect to their proceedings. It is useless now and then to shout "no popery" and run away.

Inside the Establishment it may be nothing can be done. We Nonconformists should feel our duty to be all the more imperative, and redouble our efforts for the propagation of an unadulterated Gospel. When will Nonconformists as a body be men, and cause this Romanising farce under national auspices to cease, or know the reason why?

We are not unmindful of the piety and virtue of excellent men in the ranks of Sacerdotalism, nor would we impugn the sincerity of the clergy and others who are working out the system. So far as they personally are concerned, our language is that of the Apostle Paul: "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." But the system we affirm to be erroneous in principle and disastrous in its effects.

Against this energetic and injurious priesthood Nonconformists, as has been already shown, have no class of priests to put in the field. We do not, however, ignore distinctions of office in our churches. The absence of any sacerdotal element does not involve equality of rank in the membership. There is a sense in which all are equal, and another in which all are not equal. All are "called to be saints," but the saints have not all the same gifts, and there are official positions which could not possibly be shared by the members indiscriminately. The Apostolic churches had no priests, but neither were any of them left without officers. All Christians are brethren, and the one Master is Christ, yet the rule of Christ by His Spirit is through properly appointed officers, and not independently of them. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and in

teaching." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them ; for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account ; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief ; for this were unprofitable for you." The alternative of tyranny is constitutional government, and not anarchy, which is in fact the worst tyranny of all. If we are free from a despotic Sacerdotalism, we need the more carefully to maintain a scriptural authority.

The truth of the direct personal relation of man to God, a profound conviction of which gave Puritanism its strength, is obscured and set aside by Sacerdotalism. Precisely in this matter does the Nonconformist ministry appear in sharp contrast to a priesthood. Both in what it *is* and in what it *does*, that ministry makes prominent the truth which Sacerdotalism subverts.

The Nonconformist minister enters upon his office in response to a Divine call. There may be various ways in which he becomes assured of this call, but he is what he is because he believes that Christ who rules the Church by His Spirit has put him into the ministry. There may be unworthy ministers, as there are unworthy church members. I am not speaking of them, nor am I speaking as if no man were liable to mistake ; but the Divine call, whatever our regulations and methods may be, is regarded as the great essential qualification. Apart from the Holy Spirit, the Nonconformist minister has no fitness for his work, and without reliance upon the Holy Spirit he would not dare to undertake it. But here lies the great distinction between the Nonconformist ministry and the priesthood. Instead of a gift said to be transmitted from the Apostles, through a succession of bishops, by a process involving repeatedly a

physical contact, the Nonconformist minister receives the Holy Ghost direct from the great Head of the Church. The measure of his spiritual endowment can only be estimated as far as the results of his labours are seen; but whatever that may be, he advances no claim to any spiritual power which, like the supposed gift through Apostolic Succession, cannot be seen to produce any effect whatever. Let us not be misunderstood. Men in the Church of England, or out of it, may receive the gift of the Holy Ghost for the work of the ministry, but if they do, it comes to them directly from the Head of the Church, and is not contingent on any so-called Apostolical Succession. That is our Nonconformist position on the subject. "The tree is known by its fruit." According to the sacerdotal theory the most ignorant and unworthy man, if he have received priest's orders, is God's minister, whilst the saintliest and most successful preacher of the Gospel who is not episcopally ordained is a mere layman. That we say is a theory alike unreasonable and unscriptural, and it is inconsistent with the spiritual nature of the Christian religion.

In our conception of the work for which the Holy Ghost is given, the position of the Nonconformist minister is in sharp contrast to that of the priest. The priest intervenes between the soul and God. The Nonconformist minister seeks to bring the soul into direct spiritual contact with God. Whether the minister do the work of an evangelist, or exercise the functions of a pastor or a teacher, this is the governing principle. The priest professes to represent Christ. The minister points to Christ. The priest says, "I absolve thee." The minister says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." That

the penitent sinner should himself receive Christ directly, and that the believer should have fuller knowledge of Christ and closer fellowship with Him—these are the minister's aims. People must see with their own eyes, and understand for themselves. The minister cannot relieve them from the responsibility of thinking for themselves, and of coming to a decision for themselves. He can only, to the best of the ability given him, speak to them God's word. If he can aid in the enlightenment of conscience, the strengthening of faith, the broadening of sympathies, the ennobling of character, he has a rich reward. It is growth "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" that he desires to see in his hearers. His people cannot throw their responsibility on him. They and he must give account of themselves to God. He wants no power over their souls, he would simply help them to a more saintly life. The influence of such a ministry must obviously be very different from that of Sacerdotalism. The latter is apt to induce both scepticism and credulity. Thoughtful persons in the common walks of life, who know nothing of the intellectual processes by which educated and accomplished men have come to adopt a sacerdotal system, see only those aspects of it which appear to them a perpetual outrage on common sense. If that is Christianity, they think they are as well without it. On the other hand, the people who want their thinking done for them, and yet feel their need of a religion, will accept all the priest says without questioning. Is he not God's minister? Does he not know all about the matter? If anything is wrong, it will be his fault. The Nonconformist minister's procedure, as we have seen, is one to

encourage thoughtfulness, and to insist on personal responsibility.

It is plain enough which of the two systems is conducive to mental and moral freedom, and the growth of Christian manhood. Enslavement is the result of Sacerdotalism. Emancipation follows the ministry of the word of God.

A sacerdotal system, moreover, tends to formalism. The mass of people, finding certain rites and ceremonies insisted upon, treat them as being the religion itself; and when the rites are performed, and the ceremonial perfected, the religion is done. We are all too prone to formality in religious exercises, but whilst live preaching is a force to lift us out of it, a ritualistic system naturally and inevitably aggravates the mischief. Where it is prevalent, religion is in danger of being divorced altogether from common life.

Closely allied to formalism is superstition. Where there is a punctilious regard for ritualistic correctness, a slip of detail becomes ominous of evil. A ministry of enlightenment, in contrast to routine performances, is unfavourable to superstition. The priest is a mystery-man, who has secrets in his working which the uninitiated cannot understand. It is the glory of the preacher that the common people should hear him gladly. His business is to take down the shutters, fling open the windows, and let in the sunshine and fresh air.

The legacy of superstition which the Sacerdotalism of past ages has left is still of considerable extent, and the seeds of a new harvest are being sown by the Anglican priests to-day. Ecclesiastical superstition waits on us from

the cradle to the grave. The Saviour's loving assurance is not valid for the new-born babe until the priest has marked its forehead with a cross. And when the earthly pilgrimage is over, the worn-out body must be laid in consecrated earth. Perhaps there is nothing in our practices more likely to cause bewildering astonishment generations hence than the two chapels which we persist in building in our cemeteries, and the line which marks off the consecrated ground. Superstition dies hard. Charles Wesley willed to be buried in consecrated ground. One good result was the utterance of some strong words on the subject by his more advanced and larger-minded brother. "You say, 'This is *consecrated ground*, so many feet *broad*, and so many *long*;' but, pray, how *deep* is it? 'Deep! what does that signify?' Oh, a great deal! for if my grave be dug too *deep*, I may happen to get out of the *consecrated ground*! And who can tell what unhappy consequences may follow from this! I take the whole of this practice to be a mere relic of Romish superstition; and I wonder that any sensible Protestant should think it right to countenance it; much more that any reasonable man should plead for the necessity of it! Surely it is high time now that we should be guided, not by custom, but by Scripture and reason."

In all this controversy we wish to conform to "Scripture and reason." Our contention is for truth, or it is worthless. If our opponents have the truth, then, in the name of the God of truth, we would desire that they should manifestly succeed in showing it. Why should we wish for any other issue of the controversy than the manifestation of truth wherever it may be found? The day is coming

which shall declare the true nature of all our work. "The fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is." It cannot be to the interest of any of us to pass our lives under illusions, and to discover that we have been building with "wood, hay, stubble," when we might have used "gold, silver, costly stones." Because we feel this, we would welcome the most thorough testing of the principles we hold. Thus far we are convinced that the right in this controversy is not to be found in the great state churches and hierarchies, with their wealth, their pomp, and their worldly magnificence ; but is rather to be looked for amongst poorer and more despised people, whom God often chooses still to be "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to them that love Him."

In the great Civil War, when the Parliamentary forces were being badly beaten, Cromwell saw that if defeat was to be changed to victory, there must needs be a better stamp of soldiers employed, and he told his friend John Hampden so. "'Your troops,' said I, 'are most of them old decayed serving-men, and tapsters, and such kind of fellows ; and,' said I, 'their troops are gentlemen's sons, younger sons, and persons of quality : do you think that the spirits of such base and mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen, that have honour and courage and resolution in them ?' Truly I did represent to him in this manner conscientiously ; and truly I did tell him, 'You must get men of a spirit : and take it not ill what I say,—I know you will not,—of a spirit that is likely to go as far as gentlemen will go :—or else you will be beaten still.'"
Cromwell not only advised, he acted. "I raised such men as had the fear of God before them, as

made some conscience of what they did ; and from that day forward, I must say to you, they were never beaten, and wherever they were engaged against the enemy, they beat continually." Now whilst I shall not be supposed to liken our forces to "the old decayed serving-men, and tapsters," of whom Cromwell spoke, I would remind you that in the ranks of the Sacerdotalists you will find that Cavalier element which won battles at the beginning of the Civil War. And in this conflict, as in that, it is necessary, if we would have success, to see to it that our companies are made up of men who have the fear of God before them, and make conscience of what they do. In other words, it needs the strength of a sturdy Puritanism to wrestle with and overcome a genteel and fashionable Sacerdotalism. We must train Ironsides if we would count on victory. How is this to be done?

We must ourselves be sure of our ground. Do we understand the principles which we have been considering? Are we satisfied of their intrinsic value? They should be precious, for the cost of preserving them has been great. A merely formal acceptance of them is not sufficient. There needs to be the "assent and consent" of the reason and the heart. If doubt exists in the mind, it should be fairly faced, examined, and resolved. If on examination the principles are shown to be false, let them be repudiated ; but if they are seen to be true, their grandeur will also be revealed, and adherence to them will not be formal, but enthusiastic. We shall not only be sure of our ground, we shall be proud of our inheritance.

Those who are brought up in Nonconformist homes should be instructed in Nonconformist principles. If they

are not, and do not examine the question for themselves, they cannot of course become enthusiastic about them.

The people who attend Nonconformist places of worship as a matter of convenience, or simply because they prefer to do so, or for any merely accidental reason, cannot be expected to impart strength to Nonconformity in its conflict with Sacerdotalism. They have never considered the principles. They will not care to suffer any disability or inconvenience in order to maintain them. Yet, if they can be persuaded to seriously examine the foundation of the Nonconformist position, they may become some of its strongest adherents.

If we grasp our principles without misgiving there will be the accent of conviction in our tone when we state them, and the whole treatment of our Nonconformity will be expressive of our faith. There will be a becoming dignity also in our bearing towards those whose assumptions of ecclesiastical superiority we see to be hollow. Respectfulness will not degenerate into obsequiousness. Conscious of our commission from the Great King, we shall not allow it to be supposed to be inferior to that which is based on an unprovable and incredible theory.

Our methods will be worthy of our principles. We shall not try to imitate those who offer attractive worldly inducements to conformity, or resort to petty acts of bribery to promote it. Outward conformity may be secured in that way to the grievous injury of the souls of those who receive and those who bestow the bribes; but Nonconformity is worthless unless spiritual advantages are secured, and these are not gained by unspiritual appliances. David in Saul's armour would not be free to put forth his powers. He

must keep to his simpler weapons, and trust in the Lord his God.

The principles of the Free Churches ought to be their own recommendation, and association with them be esteemed a privilege. It is no disparagement to them to say that they afford opportunities for giving rather than for receiving. This is natural, since the Lord of the Churches has affirmed "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Every one who joins a Christian church should do so with the idea of serving rather than of being served, "even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Our conviction of the truth and worth of our principles will influence us in another way. We shall not yield to the feverish excitement which is so prevalent. The eager zeal, which seems as if it would die if it were not conspicuous, the unscrupulous sensationalism that must be attractive at all costs, the attempts to make Christianity pleasant to the worldly taste—these things will be seen to be wrong in principle and doomed to fail. Besides the injury done to those who practise such arts, they also harm those for whose benefit they are supposed to be adopted, in inducing the supposition that some favour is conferred by the acceptance of the Gospel, whereas the favour is all the other way. If men are not sinners who need a Saviour why should we preach? If they are not perishing, why should we interfere with their pursuits, and disturb them in their pleasures? If we cannot offer them "the pearl of great price," which it is worth while for a man to sell all that he has to buy, we have no sufficient reason for evangelistic fervour. To treat the Gospel as a pill that must be swallowed is to

betray it. It is to be received on its manifest intrinsic value.

“To guard a title that was rich before,
To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or, with taper light,
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.”

This sentence may condemn not a few oratorical displays on the transcendent theme of the Christian revelation, much more may it shame us out of attempts to set it forth in the tawdry decorations of what is pleasant and entertaining according to the taste of the world. To do that would be to degrade our mission, and to expose ourselves to the suspicion of insincerity. If in the strong words of the dying Wesley we can say, “The best of all is, God is with us,” we want none of these things.

The conflict with Sacerdotalism is so severe that we need to look well to our consistency. We cannot expect success unless we strive lawfully. No chance blows are to give us the victory. We must be in good fighting condition, for every muscle may be strained in the encounter. We need to put aside all encumbrances, and strip off everything flimsy and unreal.

“Rise ! for the day is passing,
And you lie dreaming on ;
The others have buckled their armour,
And forth to the fight are gone.
A place in the ranks awaits you,
Each man has some part to play—
The past and the future are nothing
In the face of the stern *to-day*.

“ Rise from your dreams of the future,
Of gaining some hard-fought field ;
Of storming some airy fortress,
Or bidding some giant yield.
The future has deeds of glory,
Of honour—God grant it may !
But your arm will never be stronger,
Or the need so great as *to-day*.

“ Rise ! if the Past detain you,
Her sunshine and storms forget :
No chains so unworthy to hold you
As those of a vain regret ;
Sad or bright, she is lifeless ever,
Cast her phantom arms away,
And live but to learn the lesson
Of a nobler strife *to-day*.

“ Rise ! for the day is passing—
And the sound that you scarcely hear,
Is the enemy marching to battle—
Arise ! for the foe is here.
Stay not to sharpen your weapons,
Or the hour may strike at last,
When from dreams of a *coming* battle
You may wake to find it *past*.”

I spoke at the beginning of these lectures of the progress of Nonconformity being a return to primitive Christianity. That return or advance, call it which you may, seems sadly slow. There is so much error to unlearn, so much truth to be recovered. Milton's matchless representation of the tragic story in his speech to the Parliament of England, for the liberty of unlicensed printing, will, better than anything I can say, present the case. “ Truth indeed came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape, most glorious to look on : but when He ascended, and His Apostles after Him were laid asleep,

then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming ; He shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection."

Now in the fewest words let me remind you of the prominent points of our Nonconformist position as surveyed in these lectures.

Accepting the Bible as the sufficient standard of authority in religion, we do not believe God has given an infallible human interpreter of it, but that the teaching of His Spirit is available for every one who "willeth to do His will."

Claiming liberty of conscience for ourselves, we dare not deny it to any human being, for we are assured that "each one of us shall give account of himself to God."

According to our theory of a church, it is "a congregation of faithful persons," and that implies a converted membership.

In each of these churches we look for the rule of Christ by His Spirit, and therefore cannot brook the interference of the powers of the world in its affairs.

The independence of the Church requires moreover freedom from State patronage as well as from State control.

It is the privilege as well as the duty of the membership to defray their own expenses.

We strongly affirm that every penitent sinner may have direct approach to the Saviour without any priestly interference, and that the intervention of a priest between Christ and His members is alike impertinent and absurd.

Uniformity in belief and practice we do not regard as necessary, or indeed possible in this world, but we contemplate a much grander thing, namely, that union, that oneness in Himself, for which the Saviour prayed.

The whole story of Nonconformity exhibits the triumph of moral and spiritual forces over the solid pressure of material advantage, social prestige, and ingrained prejudice. Each victory over these great obstacles should make the course easier, but the pace at which we travel will be proportioned to the vital energies of our spiritual constitution.

The worldly forces which operate in favour of the Church Establishment as against Free Church life, are enormous, and the carnality within us yields easily to them. Unconverted children in our families are not likely to adhere to Nonconformity, nor can any who are not thoroughly in earnest be trusted to bear its disadvantages. Why should they?

No doubt it is a miserable plea to make, when young people say, as we know some of them do say, that they must go to church if they are to get on in the world. Yet, unless they perceive the intrinsic excellence of the principles for which we contend, it is not strange that they should drift into the Establishment.

I want our young men and women to see that "the treasures of Egypt" are poor compensation for the loss of what the fathers died to win, and that in leaving the meeting-house for the gorgeous temple they may escape "the reproach of Christ" only to weaken their moral fibre, and do infinite damage to their spiritual nature. I want to impress upon them, also, that if they are minded to reject the world, there is no safe refuge for them in Sacerdotalism. In it they are likely to find the world in another form. Cloth of gold and jewelled robes do not secure "the beauty of holiness." Ornate ritual and thrilling music are apt to play the worshipper false, by passing off upon him sensuous emotion as if it were spiritual experience.

Young men and women, I have tried to excite your interest in Nonconformist principles because I believe that they best express the nature of primitive Christianity, and I see in them scriptural simplicity and moral grandeur. I do not believe we can retain you in our ranks by adopting the style and fashion of a worldly Establishment, or by borrowing any of its attractions. The rôle of an imitator in these things does not suit us, and is unworthy of the stock from which we spring. If the best we have to offer you is only a rival scheme of material organisation we had better let you go; but if we have the goodly heritage of a more spiritual faith and worship, it were folly on your part to turn away. Examine the principles well, and if you find them to be true, I beseech you not to trifle with them. Choose loyalty to Christ rather than worldly advancement, and His friendship instead of priestly bondage; and be sure that the approving smile of the Great King will one

day amply recompense those who have bravely borne His reproach.

“ Life is before ye—from the road
Ye cannot turn : then take ye up your load.
Not yours to tread, or leave the unknown way,
Ye must go o’er it, meet ye what ye may.
Gird up your souls within ye to the deed ;
Angels and fellow-spirits bid ye speed !
What though the brightness dim, the pleasure fade,
The glory wane,—oh ! not of these is made
The awful life that to your trust is given.
Children of God ! inheritors of heaven !
Mourn not the perishing of each fair toy,
Ye were ordained to do, not to enjoy,
To suffer, which is nobler than to dare ;
A sacred burthen is this life ye bear,
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly,
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly ;
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win ;
God guard ye, and God guide ye on your way,
Young pilgrim warriors who set forth to-day.”

Appreciative Notices

AT a largely attended *Conversazione*, held in the Barnfield Hall, Exeter, in which Wesleyan Methodists, Bible Christians, Free Church Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Free Church Episcopalians took part, the following resolution was unanimously passed :—

“That the cordial thanks of this Meeting be given to the Rev. E. C. PIKE, B.A., for the very efficient service he has rendered the Free Churches in this city by his most timely and able Lectures on ‘English Nonconformity,’ and that it also assures him of its high appreciation of his many other valuable services in the exposition and defence of Free Church principles during his many years’ residence in Exeter, and wishes him yet greater blessing and success in his advocacy of unfettered and enlightened Christianity in the future.

(Signed) R. HARDING,
President of E.E.F.C.C.

JOHN PELLOW,
Secretary of E.E.F.C.C.

EXETER, 23rd Feb. 1894.”

From Rev. W. JUSTIN EVANS

“Having heard two of Mr. PIKE’S Lectures on the History of ‘Nonconformity,’ I can with great heartiness recommend them to the notice of our Churches. They are just what are needed for the stirring times before us, firm in principle, clear

in statement, and packed full of facts. Moreover, Mr. PIKE delivers them with great force and power. It will do our young people good to hear the interesting story of how our fathers thought and fought, suffered and died.

W. JUSTIN EVANS.

CONGREGATIONAL MANSE, EXETER."

From PLYMOUTH

"The Rev. E. C. PIKE, B.A., delivered his Series of Lectures on 'English Nonconformity' in Plymouth, in March 1894, under the auspices of the Plymouth and Stonehouse Nonconformist Ministerial Association. Those who were privileged to hear the Lectures very heartily bear testimony as to their great value, and all agree that much good must result from matters of such vital and present-day importance, being so ably and lucidly placed before the public.

(Signed) J. LUKE, *Chairman.*

J. T. MAXWELL, *Hon. Sec."*

From DEVONPORT

"We had the pleasure of hearing Mr. PIKE'S Lectures in the Public Hall, Devonport. They displayed great research and a very careful array of well-authenticated facts in the History of 'Nonconformity.' They are especially useful to young people, and our Sunday-school classes, who need to be instructed in the history of our Free Church principles. We hope Mr. PIKE will have many opportunities of delivering his Lectures in other places, and be well supported in his efforts.

A. BRAINE,

President of the Devon Baptist Association.

W. HAWKES,

Treasurer and Secretary of Local Committee."

From TORQUAY. (To Rev. J. Pellow)

"I am desired by the Members of the Fraternal to express to you our unanimous sense of the deep interest which Mr. PIKE'S Lectures created in the minds of all who listened to them. They embodied the results of large historical research, conducted with an insight, and communicated in a most able and convincing manner. We only wish all our congregations could have the advantage of listening to these admirable studies of the History of our 'English Nonconformity.' When Mr. PIKE was here, I (and others) expressed the hope that they might be printed. Nothing I have met with has seemed to me so well calculated to imbue the minds of our young people with the knowledge and love of the principles of Evangelical Nonconformity.

THOS. ISLIP,

*Secretary to the Torquay Nonconformist
Fraternal Association."*

**From Rev. C. CHAPMAN, M.A., LL.D., President of
the Western College, Plymouth**

"I had the pleasure of listening to Mr. PIKE on the occasion of the delivery of his Lectures on 'Nonconformity,' and felt at the time how great an advantage it would be if the public had an opportunity of reading them. I am glad they are to be published, and most cordially commend them to young and old as being full of valuable information, set in a clear interesting form, and calculated to form a sound judgment on matters of great importance to the Christian Church. They strengthen conviction where it is formed, and will also have weight with impartial minds desirous of knowing the truth and acting on it.

CHARLES CHAPMAN.

WESTERN COLLEGE, PLYMOUTH,
June 6, 1894."

APPRECIATIVE NOTICES

**From Professor ANTHONY, M.A., of the Western
College, Plymouth**

"I have much pleasure in commending to the favourable notice of the members of our Free Churches, and indeed to those not connected with them, the Lectures of Rev. E. C. PIKE, B.A., on 'Nonconformity.' They are clear and forcible in style, impartial in their treatment of the subject, and interesting from beginning to end. The history of the past, presented as it is in these Lectures, cannot fail to lead all to a fuller appreciation of the privileges of the present, and to an earnest desire and effort to complete the work of religious equality for all sections of the community.

F. E. ANTHONY.

PLYMOUTH, *May* 1894."

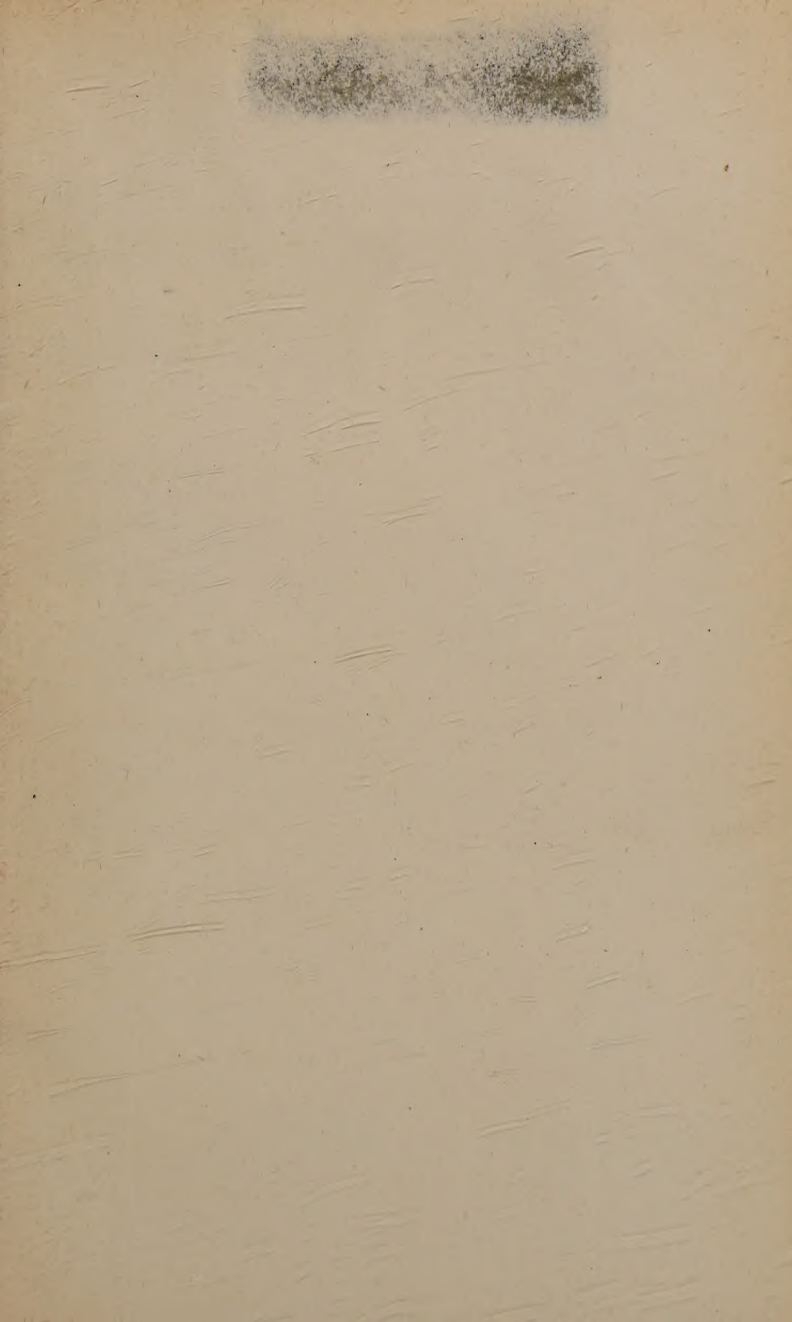
**From Rev. J. CULROSS, D.D., and Rev. W. J.
HENDERSON, B.A., Joint-Presidents of the Baptist
College, Bristol**

"BAPTIST COLLEGE, BRISTOL,
1st June 1894.

"Mr. PIKE is well known as a powerful and impartial advocate of Free Church principles. He is thoroughly master of his subject, and his Lectures have been much appreciated wherever they have been delivered.

JAMES CULROSS.

W. J. HENDERSON."



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